

Confirmation of Candidature Information for Schools

Overview

The University of New England requires all doctoral candidates who commenced candidature from 1 January 2007 onwards to undertake a Confirmation of Candidature process. The Confirmation phase, common to most Australian universities, represents the formal completion of the probationary period of a doctoral student's candidature. The Confirmation of Candidature Procedure has been approved by Academic Board. The Procedure can be accessed from the UNE [Policies](#) website.

For doctoral programs of 3 years duration student progress will be assessed at 6 months after enrolment for full-time students and at the 12 month period for part-time students. For students in professional doctorates assessment would normally be carried out 6 months after work on the thesis or portfolio has begun for full-time students and at 12 months after work on the thesis or portfolio has begun for part-time students.

Confirmation of Candidature at UNE is a developmental strategy aimed at providing support for doctoral students in the formative stage of their research, particularly helping them to attain the academic preparedness necessary to progress to the next stage of their degree.

The Confirmation process assesses formally to what extent students are 'on track' during the early period of their candidature and their readiness to attempt the next phase of their research. In this sense, Confirmation of Candidature comprises both an educational component, as well as being an integral part of the University's quality assurance processes.

The specific aims of Confirmation of Candidature are to:

1. Identify early in students' candidature any support and guidance necessary for their proceeding successfully to the next major stage of their research;
2. assess progress to date and the academic preparedness of the candidate to complete their degree (or course);
3. provide an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate written and other necessary research skills appropriate to the doctoral level of study; and
4. achieve more timely and successful completions.

Confirmation of Candidature Information at Induction

The Confirmation process will need to be explained to all new doctoral students early in their candidature, including those who upgrade from masters to doctoral level, and the timetabling of the process discussed and documented in the Supervisor Agreement. At these sessions, students will need to receive information about the support available to them during their candidature as indicated in relevant documents (eg. [HDR Portal - HDR RAP](#)). Importantly, they will need to know about the Confirmation process, the tasks to be completed in the given timeframe, the composition of the Confirmation Panel and how it will conduct its business. The necessary criteria for successful completion of Confirmation of Candidature are outlined in Section 3 (9) of the Confirmation of Candidature Procedures. The student needs to understand the role of Confirmation of Candidature as a major milestone in their research project. At the time of confirmation, Confirmation Panel members will be required to sign off when the student has undergone this induction process.

Confirmation of Candidature Panel

School Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of each School to organise suitable times for the conduct of each HDR students Confirmation of Candidature Panel.

Student Responsibilities

Two weeks before meeting with the Panel, the student will need to submit to its Chair:

- the Confirmation of Candidature Proforma which requires the student to complete the first part of the document; the proforma can be found on the Research Services webpage under the [My Study](#) tab.
- a copy of their approved research proposal; and
- any other documentation relevant to the Panel (e.g. presentations given on the research, signed off induction course(s), evidence of having met any of the required milestones, as outlined in the Supervisor Agreement or other documentation).

Panel Responsibilities

The Confirmation of Candidature Panel membership is outlined in Section 3 (11) of the Confirmation of Candidature Procedures.

Instructions for the conduct of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel are outlined in Section 3 (12) of the Confirmation of Candidature Procedures.

The decision making process of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel is outlined in Section 3 (13) of the Confirmation of Candidature Procedures. The Confirmation of Candidature Proforma, to be completed by the Panel, can be found on the Research Services website under the [My Study](#) tab.

How to communicate the outcome of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel is outlined in Section 3 (19) of the Confirmation of Candidature Procedures.

Non-Confirmation and Appeal

In cases where the Panel decides not to confirm candidature, Panel members should refer to Section 3 (21). Students wishing to appeal non-confirmation of candidature will find the Appeal procedures in the same section.

TIPS FOR CONFIRMATION PANELS

- Candidates need to be reminded that an electronic copy of the written submission should be sent to the supervisor for distribution to the panel members two weeks before the interview. Part 1 of the Confirmation Proforma must be filled in by the student.
- The candidate should be informed about the agenda for the interview (see below) and should be prepared for the interview to last about half an hour.
- Where a member of the panel is required to be present in two different roles (e.g. as both Head of School and Supervisor), the School should arrange for a substitute to fulfil one of the roles or for an extra member to be invited onto the panel.
- The structure of the panel meetings might follow this format:
 1. The panel may want meet prior to the interview to review the cover sheet and report form, share overall

thoughts on the written submission and establish the ground rules for the interview.

2. The interview itself might begin with a reassuring welcome from the Chair designed to put the candidate at ease, and to emphasise that the exercise is intended to be constructive rather than inquisitorial. On the other hand it should not be just a rubber stamp, and ideally a good candidate might well leave the session not only feeling reassured but also taking away some constructive critical comments and new ideas about the project and how to make it work.
3. The Chair might then invite the candidate to make their presentation, elaborating on and contextualising the written submission, with a particular emphasis on the research question/thesis statement and progress plans/timeline.
4. The members of the panel then have opportunity to ask formal questions. It is important that the questions be answered by the candidate without undue prompting from the supervisor.
5. At the end of the formal questions there might be opportunity for a general discussion about issues that have been raised by the questions and responses. This is where the supervisor might add some clarifying comments if appropriate.
6. The Chair finally needs to ask the routine questions about IP, resources, WH&S issues etc, if these have not been addressed in the written documentation.
7. Following the interview the candidate has will be asked to leave the room while the panel discusses their reactions to the interview with reference to the questions on the Confirmation Proforma. At this point the Chair should lead the panel in a process to collectively draft responses.
8. The Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel should write up the report and arrange for it to be signed by the panel members at the time of the meeting. In turn the candidate should be provided opportunity to consider the decision of the panel, sign and return the document to the Chair or advise the chair of their decision not to sign the confirmation document. It should be understood that the report may include recommendations about issues for the candidate and the supervisor(s) to take into account, or requests for more detailed information to be provided to the Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature panel or the Head of School.
9. Copies of the signed report need to be given to the candidate, forwarded to Research Services and kept on file in the School, together with the candidate's written submission, as required.

The timing of the interviews might be:

Preliminary discussion:	15 minutes
Interview:	30 minutes
Discussion:	10-15 minutes