

# Higher Degree by Research Candidature Progression and Development

## School/discipline information

School/institute: LAW

Discipline(s): LAW

Students enrolled in MPhil or PhD will be required to complete three milestones during their candidature. The general requirements for milestones and applicable deadlines are set by the Graduate School, but the Law School imposes discipline specific requirements. The timing also differs in order for assessment of work to be conducted before the expiry of the Graduate School's deadlines. If you are in doubt as to any of the requirements please contact the Law School's HDR Liaison Officer at [hdr.law@enquire.uq.edu.au](mailto:hdr.law@enquire.uq.edu.au). The requirements at each milestone are set out below.

## Milestone one: Confirmation of candidature

Confirmation is a critically important moment for every higher degree by research candidate. At this 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 school/institute reviews the human, physical and financial resources needed to sustain the candidature, in compliance with relevant university, disciplinary, and external regulatory protocols; and
- the University is assured by the school/institute's review that continuation of the candidature is likely to lead to an assessable thesis in about the period for which the candidate, school/institute, and University are funded to support the candidate's enrolment.

Work to be completed between admission and confirmation of candidature		School/institute expectations for PhD and MPhil
<b>Written work</b>	Specific confirmation document and sample chapter. The sample chapter may be a literature review if this is not incorporate into the confirmation document:	Candidates are required to submit the following written documents: 1. A specific confirmation document that includes: (a) An updated thesis proposal including: (i) The provisional title of the thesis; (ii) A description and evaluation of the project and its significance; (iii) The research questions to be examined; (iv) The proposed research methods; and (v) The proposed thesis structure including provisional chapter outlines.

		<p>(b) A critical review of published work in the field.</p> <p>(c) A timeline for completion of the proposed chapters of the thesis.</p> <p>(d) Identification of additional resources that may be required for completion of the project.</p> <p>2. A draft chapter.</p>
	Word limit (if considered appropriate)	While there is no word limit, the confirmation documents will usually be approximately 10,000 words (approximately 30pp. double spacing) for PhD confirmation and 7,500 words (approximately 25pp. double spacing) for an MPhil confirmation.
	Quality expectations	The confirmation documents are expected to demonstrate a high quality of academic writing. The material presented should not be merely descriptive but reflect a sufficient measure of critical originality and theoretical coherence.
	Timing (one month before oral presentation and interview)	The confirmation documents must be submitted to the Coordinator of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) at least four weeks prior to the proposed date of the oral presentation. The date of the oral presentation will be determined by the Coordinator of HDR in consultation with the candidate and the candidate's advisor(s).
	Assessment process (written work is assessed by at least one independent academic and the advisory team)	The candidate's confirmation documents will be read by the candidate's advisor(s) and by an expert reader. The expert reader is to provide written comment and evaluation to the Confirmation Panel which will normally discuss their comments with the principal advisor and the candidate during the panel meeting. The written report of the expert reader is to be submitted to the Confirmation Panel at least a week prior to the candidate's confirmation presentation where possible.
<b>Oral work</b>	Accepted formats (formal presentation to school)	<p>The seminar will be advertised as part of the Law School Seminar Series. The confirmation committee and advisors will be in attendance.</p> <p>The purpose of the oral component is to give the candidate the opportunity to present their research project to an appropriate group of peers for the purpose of receiving constructive advice about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proposed project;</li> <li>• its scope and feasibility;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the appropriateness of the theoretical approach and methodology.</li> </ul>
	Duration	The oral component of the confirmation process will usually require the candidate to present their thesis proposal for not more than 45 minutes, with a further 15 minutes for question time and discussion. The candidate may use PowerPoint slides or other visual aids, but this is not compulsory.
	Quality expectations	The oral component should be pitched at an audience with general legal knowledge. It should be clear and easy to follow and free of jargon.
	Timing	The seminar presentation will take place after the submission of written material.
	Assessment process	The Confirmation Panel will provide feedback to the candidate and provide assessment of the oral component to the candidate. This will be included in the written report.
<b>Interview/dialogue</b>	Participants	The Confirmation Panel will interview the candidate and their principal advisor together and then each of them separately. The Confirmation Panel will usually be Chaired by a Professor or Associate Professor with another member of academic staff as the other Confirmation Panel member. The Confirmation Panel will be guided by the Law School Confirmation Policy.
	Expected duration	40 minutes
	Quality expectations	The candidate must demonstrate the viability and progress of the research project.
	Timing	The interview will take place after the candidate's oral presentation, usually immediately after.
	Assessment process (Participants discuss feedback to candidate and assessment report to Graduate School)	<p>The interview provides an opportunity for the Confirmation Panel to review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The feasibility, scope, originality and planned duration of the project in relation to the degree for which the candidate is enrolled. The reports of the expert readers of the confirmation document will provide the basis of this discussion.</li> <li>The composition of the advisory team and the roles of each of its members. If an associate advisor has not already been appointed, one will be nominated at this time.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The human and financial resources needed to bring the project to a timely and satisfactory completion.</li> <li>• All compliance requirements (e.g. induction for international students, ethics approvals, research integrity training, completion of the research integrity module) have been undertaken.</li> </ul>
<b>Written feedback</b>	Format	The Confirmation Panel will produce a written report that summarises the strengths, achievements and developmental needs of the candidate and offers suggestions towards the successful completion of candidature. The report will be provided to the candidate and the candidate's advisory team. It will be at least 500 words long.
	Timing	Normally, within a week of the interview.

## Milestone two: Mid-candidature review

The mid-candidature review represents a mid-point between confirmation of candidature and thesis review milestones. Achievement of this milestone reassures the candidate, advisory team and school/institute that:

- the project is on track for completion within candidature duration, and
- the candidate's research and other professional skills are developing appropriately.

Work to be completed between admission and confirmation of candidature		School/institute expectations for PhD and MPhil
<b>Written work</b>	Accepted formats	Conference or seminar paper and one third of the thesis.
	Approx. volume of work expected to be completed	By this stage candidates should have completed approximately one third of their thesis.
	Quality expectations (advanced drafts, thesis outline)	The conference or seminar paper is expected to be of high quality. The material presented should not be merely descriptive but reflect a sufficient measure of critical originality and theoretical coherence.
	Timing	This should be provided to the advisors two weeks before the conference or seminar presentation session.
	Assessment process	The advisors will provide written feedback to the candidate on the third of the thesis submitted. The third of the thesis submitted along with the written feedback should be sent to the Coordinator of HDR programs by the principal advisor.

<b>Oral work</b>	Accepted formats	Conference or seminar presentation. The conference must be national or international and the candidate must submit feedback from an appropriate academic attending the presentation.
	Duration (if considered appropriate)	The conference or seminar presentation should be for at least 20 minutes.
	Quality expectations	Answers to questions should be pitched at an audience with general legal knowledge. It should be clear and easy to follow and free of jargon.
	Timing	The conference or seminar presentation will take place after the submission of written material.
	Assessment process	The candidate will receive feedback from conference or seminar attendees.
<b>Interview/dialogue</b>	Participants	The candidate and their advisors will meet to discuss progress.
	Expected duration	Approximately one hour.
	Quality expectations	High academic standard.
	Timing	After the conference or seminar.
	Assessment process	The advisors will provide oral feedback to the candidate on progress and any other issues
<b>Written feedback</b>	Format	The advisors will provide written feedback to the candidate on progress and any other issues and this will be forwarded to the HDR Director.
	Timing	Within two weeks of the interview.

## Milestone three: Thesis review

The thesis review:

- enables the school/institute to determine collectively that the thesis should be ready for assessment by the expected date or determine a new submission date,
- allows any differences of opinion among the candidate and the advisory team about the readiness of the thesis for assessment to be aired and settled collegially,
- assures the candidate and advisory team of the scope, originality and quality of the thesis,
- identifies any major concerns that need attention before submission,
- provides a forum for discussing the mix of disciplinary knowledge required among the thesis assessors to review the breadth of work contained within the thesis, and

- enables the candidate and the advisors to express any reservations or concerns about having any particular individual act as an assessor.

In addition to matters normally covered by feedback and recommendation documents, the thesis review feedback attests to the quality and scope of the research, details decisions reached about the mix of thesis assessors, records reservations about particular individuals, and states the expected thesis submission date.

Work to be completed between admission and confirmation of candidature		School/institute expectations for PhD and MPhil
<b>Written work</b>	Accepted formats	Final draft of thesis.
	Word limit	80,000 words (including footnotes) maximum for PhD; 40,000 words (including footnotes) maximum for MPhil.
	Quality expectations	High academic standard.
	Timing	Recommended three months prior to thesis review due date for PhD; six weeks prior to thesis review due date for MPhil. To be discussed with advisory team.
	Assessment process	Advisor(s) will review the written draft.
<b>Oral work</b>	Accepted formats	Conference or poster presentation.
	Duration (if considered appropriate)	The conference paper presentation should be for approximately 20 minutes. Those candidates who choose to present a poster must be available to respond to enquiries during the Law School poster session.
	Quality expectations	High academic standard. Answers to questions should be pitched at an audience with general legal knowledge. It should be clear and easy to follow and free of jargon.
	Timing	The conference or poster presentation will take place after the submission of written material.
	Assessment process	The candidate will receive feedback from conference or poster session attendees.
<b>Interview/dialogue</b>	Participants	The candidate and their advisor will meet to discuss final draft.
	Expected duration	At least one hour.
	Quality expectations	High academic standard.

	Timing	Recommended one month before thesis review due date (PhD); six weeks prior to thesis review due date (MPhil).
	Assessment process	Advisors will provide detailed feedback.
<b>Written feedback</b>	Format	Detailed written feedback from advisor to the candidate also forwarded to the HDR Coordinator.
	Timing	Recommended one month before thesis review due date (PhD); six weeks before thesis review due date (MPhil).