

Millstones Milestones:

Why, when, what – and getting the most out of them (no, really)






Why have milestones?

- To cause unnecessary *sturm und drang* amongst already stressed RHD students?
- A way to remind students at annual intervals that they can be booted out of their RHD program at any time?
- Because academics and administrators just don't have enough to do with their days?



No, seriously – why?

- Milestones play an important role in terms of:
 - The academic development of the candidate
 - Resources allocation for the enrolling School (including advisory commitments and material resources); and
 - Quality assurance – for the University AND the candidate
- The milestone process is a way of reassuring the candidate, advisory team, School, and University that the quality, originality, and quantity of research completed, and the candidate's oral and written skills, are appropriate for each stage of candidature.



So they're not just about pain and suffering...

Definitely not (although there are times when it can seem that way)!

Milestones are about providing candidates with opportunities to receive feedback and guidance throughout their program.

The milestones process provides some structure to what can otherwise be a potentially rambling journey, and is also designed to keep students on track to complete their degrees within a reasonable (for everyone) timeframe.



When?

- For PhD students confirmed after January 1 2013, milestones are due at fixed* 12-month intervals (FTE) **from the date of commencement**
- MPhil student milestones are due at fixed* 6-month intervals **from commencement** for students confirmed after January 1 2013

* If you have an approved extension, or make changes to your candidature (e.g., taking leave, or going part-time), the due dates will adjust as a result.



When?

- Students will generally receive an email reminder from Alison that they have a milestone coming up, and the milestone requirements
 - 8-12 weeks prior to confirmation
 - c. 4 weeks before mid-candidature/thesis review
- You don't have to wait for a reminder – you can check your milestone due date on mySI-net:
 - Click on the “Research” tab, then select “Candidature”



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- Staff Home
- myPage
- Personal
- Program
- Courses
- Timetable
- Financial
- Research
- myRequests
- Other Links

Menu

- mySI-net
 - myPage
 - Personal
 - Program
 - Courses
 - Timetable
 - Financial
 - Research
 - Research Summary
 - Candidature
 - Scholarship Details
 - Thesis Details
 - Leave Details
 - Remote Candidature
- myRequests
- Other Links
 - Select Student by Number, Name
 - Activity Log

Candidature

Note: If the information here is incorrect, email the Graduate School at candidature@gradschool.uq.edu.au for assistance.

Doctor of Philosophy

Enrolling School: Psychology School

Ownership	Ownership %
Psychology School	100.000

Milestone Requirements :

Requirement	Due Date (DD/MM/YYYY)
Thesis Review Process	31/03/2015

Advisor List:

Role	Name	School	Load %
Associate	Dr Hubertina Whingepot	Psychology School	40.000
Principal	Prof Bruno Grumbles	Psychology School	60.000

Please Note: All external advisors and all UQ staff who are not part of a school are listed as University of Queensland Graduate School.

Request Change to Candidature:

Change	Status	As of Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

You have not requested any changes to candidature, your request has been expired, or your request has been Approved or Denied more than 60 days ago.



What: A 3-stage process

Prior to thesis submission, each candidate must attain three milestones:

- Confirmation of candidature
- Mid candidature review
- Thesis review



What: Milestone requirements

1. Written work
 - confirmation document/manuscript/paper
2. Goals, planning, and review
 - setting and measuring goals
3. Oral presentation
 - confirmation seminar/conference presentation
4. Interview
 - student, advisors, independent panel Chair (RHD committee member)



Confirmation of candidature

- Receiving feedback on your proposed project – is it viable in terms of direction and scope? Is the proposal clearly defined and coherent?
- Do you have the required training and resources to complete the project – within the required/recommended timeframe?
- Is your advisory team appropriate for the current needs and direction of the project?



Confirmation of candidature

1. Written work: confirmation document
5000 words/10 pages maximum
2. Goals and planning:
achievements by mid candidature review; what tasks
and by when
3. Oral presentation: confirmation seminar
40 minutes + 10 minutes for questions
4. Interview:
student, advisory team, conf doc readers, panel Chair



Mid candidature review

- Is your project on track for completion within the required timeframe?
- Are your research and other professional skills developing appropriately?
- Is your advisory team still appropriate for the current needs and direction of the project?



Mid candidature review

1. Written work: usually a thesis chapter or manuscript
2. Goals and planning: did the last 6/12 months go according to plan?
 achievements by thesis review; what tasks and by when
3. Oral presentation: most often a conference presentation
 poster presentations are okay
4. Interview:
 student, advisory team, panel Chair



Thesis review

- Do you have a thesis? Is the end in sight in terms of readiness for submission?
 The “magic” 80%
- Are there any issues or concerns with the thesis that need to be addressed prior to submission?
- Thesis examination decisions/options: choosing examiners, conflict of interest, oral examination?



Thesis review

1. Written work: submitted/published paper or thesis chapter
2. Goals and planning: did the time between mid candidature and thesis review go according to plan?
goals and plan of work leading up to submission
3. Oral presentation: typically a conference presentation
4. Interview:
student, advisory team, panel Chair



Milestone outcomes

All candidates receive a written report from the panel Chair summarising the interview, and the panel's recommendation

The milestone panel may recommend:

- the candidate has attained the milestone
- an extension of the due date for attaining the milestone
- a review of candidature if the milestone has not been attained after a second attempt



Extensions

- PhD: 3 3-month extensions across candidature, including submission. Maximum of 2 extensions for any milestone
- MPhil: 4.5 months of extensions, used at candidate and advisors' discretion across candidature
- Only granted on basis of research-related delays; extensions on the basis of scheduling issues have also been approved

health/personal issues/work commitments not appropriate grounds



Extensions

- Extension request forms available from the UQ Graduate School website
- Be detailed when outlining reasons for the request
- Submit your form to Alison at least 2 weeks prior to the milestone due date wherever possible



Going late with no extension?

- Possible, to a point: The Grad School conducts monthly follow-ups for overdue milestones
- Completing after the due date with no extension won't alter the due date for your next milestone
- Depends on your comfort zone 😊




Worried about “wasting” an extension?

- For students who were confirmed after January 1 2013, the standard maximum number of extensions is three (across the duration of candidature)

BUT

- Further extensions by the Grad School will be considered on a case-by-case basis if you experience additional research delays
- What's your extension history?



Preparation (especially for confirmation)

- Write as you go
- Talk with your peers (but don't go nuts on the social comparisons!)
- Attend other confirmation seminars in the School
- Practice your presentation in your lab group
- Seek out opportunities to present your work
- Try to conceptualise the milestone as an opportunity to get feedback

- BREATHE: Remember that milestones are not only about monitoring – they're also designed to support students throughout their candidature

If it feels like things might turn into custard...



“...I’ll hide under some coats, and hope that somehow everything will work out.”

OR, preferably,

TALK TO US!

