

RHD Subcommittee Handbook

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Overview

Members of the RHD Committee in the School of Psychology have several responsibilities. The intent of this handbook is to provide a “procedural manual” for these responsibilities.

In brief, RHD Committee members do the following:

1. attend the monthly RHD Committee Meeting, where we discuss (a) RHD student policies—both those unique to the School as well as from the Graduate School, (b) RHD student progress, (c) workload of RHD committee members, (d) RHD student concerns, (e) RHD committee and Graduate School initiatives (e.g., the RHD Day, the 3-Minute Thesis Competition), (f) matters raised by the RHD student representatives, and (g) other issues that arise;
2. chair committees for the Confirmation, Mid-Candidature, and Thesis Review milestones;
3. serve as the Chair of Examiners for theses;
4. review and rank lists of scholarship nominees from the School (as needed);
5. assist in RHD-sponsored activities (e.g., judging at RHD Day or School heats of the 3MT).

The current version of this handbook largely focuses on #2, which will comprise the majority of your time for the RHD committee. Note: The “PGAO” referred to in the following pages is the Postgraduate Administrative Officer, a professional staff position currently maintained by Alison Pike; the “Chair of the RHD Committee” is currently Prof Catherine Haslam (also sometimes referred to as the PGC or Director of Research Higher Degrees).

Students are expected to monitor and anticipate their milestone deadlines: however, as due dates approach they typically receive – as a courtesy – an email reminder from the PGAO, or (very occasionally) the student will contact the PGAO or PGC first. The composition of the **confirmation** panel is made by the PGC, who notifies the PGAO when a member of the RHD committee has been assigned as committee Chair. The PGAO contacts the contacts all parties involved in the confirmation (Chair, document readers, student, and advisory team) to initiate the process; the Chair then arranges with the student and the advisory team the final details of the confirmation seminar and interview. When a student reaches the **mid-candidature** or **thesis review** milestones, the PGAO contacts the student to check that she or he is indeed ready for the milestone. The PGC then assigns a member of the RHD committee to be the Chair, and the Chair contacts the student and the advisory team regarding dates, milestone requirements and other details.

Chairs of Examiners for a submitted thesis are also assigned by the PGC. The committee member’s name is listed on the nomination of examiners form prior to the student submitting his or her thesis.

Approximately 4-6 months after the student submits their thesis, the Chair of Examiners is usually required by the Graduate School to make a judgment about the student’s thesis corrections; in the event the outcome of the thesis examination is “No changes”, this step is skipped and no action by the Chair of Examiners is required.

Current guidelines state the Chair is appointed to ensure that changes requested by examiners are responded to appropriately; on (rare) occasion they may also be asked to provide discipline-specific advice to the Graduate School prior to determining the examination outcome (e.g., when examiners’ recommendations are highly divergent or the recommended outcome is revise and resubmit). Given the potential increase in the input of the Chair in the examination process in 2014 it was recommended that academic staff outside the subcommittee assume the Chair of Examiners role in the event no suitable content expert is serving on the committee: to date there have been no instances of this occurring.

The PGAO and PGC maintain a record of current RHD committee member assignments so that work can be distributed equitably across the committee.

The Milestones Policy

The progress and development of RHD candidates at The University of Queensland is managed via a series of milestones. Candidature progression and development milestones provide a structured process for evaluating: (a) the extent to which candidates are developing the knowledge, skills and abilities that they need for a career in research; (b) the quality of work that is being produced; and (c) progress towards timely completion of the project.

The goal of each milestone is to assess whether the following are appropriate for the present stage of candidature:

- the quality, originality, and amount of the research completed; and
- the oral and written presentation skills demonstrated by the candidate.

The three milestones that each candidate must attain are:

- Confirmation of candidature;
- Mid candidature review; and
- Thesis review.

Candidates are expected to complete all milestones and submit their thesis for assessment within the planned duration of their research higher degree program, typically:

- 3 – 4 years full-time equivalent (FTE) PhD candidature; or
- 1 – 2 years (FTE) MPhil candidature.

The recommendation that a milestone has (or has not) been achieved is made collectively by a milestone panel. The panel typically consists of a Chair, the Principal Advisor, and an Associate Advisor. At least one additional member of faculty sits on the panel at confirmation as a reader of the confirmation document. Two readers are required for the document: one can be an Associate Advisor, provided she or he has a <30% advisory load for that candidate.

The milestone panel makes its assessment on the basis of evidence provided by the candidate and advice provided by the advisory team about the candidate's progress towards completion of the project and development as a researcher.

The milestone panel may recommend:

- that the milestone has been achieved;
- an extension of the due date (3 months FTE for PhD students) to attain the milestone; or
- that the candidate has not achieved the milestone after more than one attempt and is liable for a review of candidature.

If the candidate is not ready to attempt a milestone by the due date, or does not achieve a milestone on the first attempt, the candidate will be given an opportunity to defer or make a second attempt at that milestone. In the event the panel recommends an extension, then the candidate will receive written advice from the panel Chair explaining: (a) why the milestone has not been achieved; (b) what is required to achieve the milestone (in terms of both quantity and quality of work); and (c) the date by which that work must be submitted.

Candidates who do not achieve a milestone after the following periods of FTE candidature may be liable for a review, and potential termination of, candidature (see table overleaf).

Summary of Milestones

For candidates confirmed AFTER JANUARY 1, 2013**

Milestone	PhD	MPhil
Confirmation	completed within 12 months of commencement 18 months = review of candidature	completed within 6 months of commencement 9 months = review of candidature
Mid-Candidature Review	completed within 12 months of confirmation due date 30 months = review of candidature	completed within 6 months of confirmation due date 15 months = review of candidature
Thesis Review	completed within 12 months of mid-can due date 42 months = review of candidature	completed within 6 months of mid-can due date 21 months = review of candidature
Submission	Completed within 3 months of thesis review due date 48 months after commencement = review of candidature	Completed within 6 weeks of thesis review due date 24 months after commencement = review of candidature

For candidates confirmed BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2013**

Milestone	PhD	MPhil
Mid-Candidature Review	complete within 12 months of confirmation 36 months = review of candidature	complete within 6 months of confirmation 18 months = review of candidature
Thesis Review	completed within 36 months of commencement 48 months = review of candidature	completed within 6 months of mid-candidature review 24 months = review of candidature
Submission	Completed within 3 months of thesis review	Completed within 6 weeks of thesis review

** Timeframes are based on full-time enrolment, and do not include periods of approved interruption

Milestone extensions

The following information is based on UQ Graduate School policy.

PhD candidates are eligible to apply for up to 3 3-month (based on full-time enrolment) extensions across the duration of their candidature, including thesis submission, with a maximum of 2 extensions for any individual milestone. The timing and use of extension is at the discretion of the candidate and advisory team (and the milestone panel). MPhil candidates have a total extension period of 4.5 months (with no request to exceed 3 months), which may be used at the candidate and advisors' discretion across candidature.

These caps apply to all students who were confirmed after January 1, 2013 (more than 90% of RHD students in our School); however, the Grad School does consider further extensions on a case-by-case basis in instances where students are affected by significant research-related delays.

It's important to note that health/personal issues/work commitments are not appropriate grounds for a milestone extension: the Grad School will only consider extensions made on the basis of research-related delays. Examples of acceptable research-related issues include unexpected experimental results, emergence of new literature, or delays in gaining ethical approval. Extensions on the basis of scheduling issues have also been approved. In instances where health or other personal issues are slowing progress, students should instead look at their options for part-time enrolment or a formal interruption to candidature: Alison can assist with this.

Completing a milestone after the due date – without an approved extension – has no impact on the due date for subsequent milestones: milestone due dates are based on the student's commencement date, not the date on which the milestone was attained. This benefits students who complete a milestone ahead of schedule, but reduces the date between milestones for students who attain a milestone after the due date and without an extension. Students are encouraged to apply for an extension in any instance where it appears they will not be able to attempt and/or attain the milestone within 1-2 weeks of the due date, but some choose to go ahead without this buffer – it varies according to the individual's comfort zone. In the event an extension is approved, the extended due date determines the date for future milestones (even if the student does not use the full extension period).

Research Integrity Module

In late 2014 the University introduced a requirement for RHD candidates to complete online training on key issues in research practice (e.g., design, data management, authorship): the Grad School has introduced an online research integrity training module, which now forms part of the milestone requirements.

Students who commenced their RHD after October 1 2014 must complete the module and test prior to confirmation; those who commenced before this date must meet the module requirements by their next milestone. As part of the milestone process students must confirm that they have completed the module in order for the milestone to be considered complete (and for the Grad School to process the attainment). The PGO will advise panel Chairs when a student is required to complete the module.

Confirmation of Candidature

Overview

The intent of the confirmation milestone is to:

- provide advice about the direction, scope, planning, and feasibility of the project; and about the acquisition or further development of appropriate research and professional skills;
- review the human, physical, financial resources needed to sustain the candidature;
- ensure that the candidate is capable of completing PhD/MPhil level work; and
- ensure that the PhD/MPhil will be completed within a reasonable time.

Work to be completed

There are four components to the confirmation process:

- a confirmation document;
- a set of goals and plan of work for the period leading up to mid-candidature review (this should also include a tentative budget for the annual allocation of student research support funds);
- a seminar; and
- an interview.

The confirmation document should be not more than 10 A4 pages single-spaced in 12 point font, with at least 2-cm margins (5,000 words maximum). References and appendices are not included in the 10-page limit, and can be single spaced in 10-point font. (Note: appendices should not contain critical information such as descriptions of procedures, etc.)

The confirmation document includes:

- a) a brief critical review of the literature on the candidate's topic
- b) the aims of the research, its theoretical rationale, its significance and hypotheses to be tested
- c) a detailed research proposal, including experimental design and methodology, measures, description of participants (including numbers needed and how they will be recruited), equipment, procedures, summary of statistical procedures, timeline, and comments about feasibility in terms of resources
- d) an indication if their work is part of funded research and if so, how it fits into that work
- e) a tentative costing/budget for the project, which includes necessary expenditure and how it will be funded (including consideration of student research support funds: currently up to a maximum of \$1000 per year for the first 3 years of candidature)
- f) any pilot or experimental work completed
- g) copies of any ethics (animal or human) clearance, required for the project. (Further information regarding ethical review can be found in the RHD student information booklet).

The confirmation document should be accompanied by a set of goals and plan of work for the period leading up to mid-candidature review. The goals should specify what the candidate aims to

achieve by mid-candidature review, while the plan of work should describe the tasks that are to be carried out and when they are expected to be done.

The seminar should be carried out within the school, and should be open to all academics and postgraduates. **The seminar should be forty (40) minutes in length and allow ten (10) minutes for questions.**

In general, the interview will immediately follow the seminar. Members of the milestone panel may ask questions regarding any aspect of the project in order to assess the candidate's level of understanding and grasp of the topic, and to evaluate the scope and feasibility of the project. The panel will discuss the proposed goals and program of work with the candidate. Progress against the agreed goals and program of work will be assessed at mid-candidature review.

Assessment

The milestone panel will assess whether:

- The project is suitable for a PhD/MPhil; considering whether the scope, originality and feasibility of the project are appropriate for a PhD and likely to attain the requirement of "making a significant new contribution to the discipline". For an MPhil, is the project likely to fulfil the requirement of "demonstrating capacity for critical analysis and application of specialist knowledge"?
- Written and oral feedback about the project has been incorporated, considered and either "taken on board" by candidate, or responded to with a suitable rejoinder;
- The candidate is capable of completing PhD/MPhil level work; as evidenced by the quality of the work completed, and the timely completion of such work.
- The PhD/MPhil promises to be completed within the expected period of candidature within existing resources; paying particular attention to the feasibility of recruitment, availability of required resources, and the candidate providing a realistic timeline for completion of the research.
- The advisory team is adequate and effective.

This assessment will be made on the basis of the material presented in the confirmation document, the seminar, and the candidate's oral response to issues raised at the seminar, the interview, and written comments from the readers, if required.

Procedures

The standard procedure for confirmation is described below.

1. A courtesy reminder is sent by the PGO to the student and advisory team approximately 6-8 weeks prior to the confirmation due date, and in response the student advises the submission date for the confirmation document (no later than 3-4 weeks prior to milestone due date). If the candidate and advisory team agree that submission is not feasible, they request an extension from the UQ Graduate School (via the PGO and PGC). If the request is approved, the PGO updates the expected submission date.
2. The student submits their confirmation document, which includes the Psychology Confirmation Cover Sheet and signed statement of originality, via email to the PGO. At this stage the student will advise the PGO of the **two** nominated readers of the

- confirmation document, who have been pre-approached by the Principal Advisor and/or student prior to their nomination.
3. Once the confirmation document is submitted, the PGAO confirms availability of the nominated readers and advises the Chair of the RHD Committee, who appoints the Chair of the confirmation milestone panel from the committee.
 4. The PGAO forwards copies of the confirmation document to the Chair and the readers. The document is sent with a memo outlining procedures in terms of scheduling the seminar and the assessment process. If a reader is unable to attend the oral presentation they may provide a written report to the Chair of the confirmation panel prior to the oral presentation. The Chair will raise any issues or questions with the candidate in the interview.
 5. The Chair of the confirmation panel will liaise with the candidate, advisory team and readers to arrange a time for the seminar and interview (a 2-hour block is usually needed). Please copy in the PGAO (psyresearch@psy.uq.edu.au) on emails related to scheduling. Room booking requests can be made via the Psychology General Office (reception@psy.uq.edu.au). The seminar and interview would usually occur between 3 and 5 weeks after submission of the confirmation document (with the aim of completing all requirements within 1-2 weeks of the official due date for the milestone). The student's Principal Advisor is responsible for advertising the seminar via the School's email lists.
 6. The seminar occurs, and the interview will normally take place immediately afterwards. There should be ample time scheduled for the interview (usually 1 hour), such that no one feels rushed through the process. In addition the following issues should be discussed during the interview:
 - a. A review of the student's plan for the time until the next milestone
 - b. A discussion of an appropriate date for mid-candidature review (based on the Graduate School timeframes outlined on page 4 of this handbook)
 - c. While the student leaves the room, the advisory team discusses with the Chair any concerns about the student's progress
 - d. While the advisory team leaves the room, the student discusses with the Chair any concerns about his or her advisory team
 7. Following the interview, the Chair of the confirmation panel prepares a written report summarising the issues, if any, that were raised during the confirmation process, and the recommendation of the panel. If there is disagreement among the members of the panel, or there are issues that are unresolved, the Chair may consult with other members of staff prior to writing the report. After completing the report, the Chair forwards their report to the student and advisory team (cc-ing the PGAO). When all parties, including the Chair, are satisfied with the content of the report, the Chair forwards the final report to the PGAO and the student will initiate an *Attainment of Milestone* request via the [Candidature Management Portal](#) that will be routed to the Principal Advisor and PGC for endorsement. A copy of the confirmation document and final written report will be kept on file in the School of Psychology.

MPhil to PhD transfers, and Confirmation of Candidature 2.0

The majority of our students who commence in the MPhil program do so with the intention of “upscaling” their project and transferring to the PhD after a period of successful progress in the MPhil. University policy requires candidates to complete confirmation in the MPhil before applying to transfer to the PhD, and candidates must submit the transfer request prior to completing the MPhil mid-candidature milestone.

In April 2016 the University modified its policy so that candidates transferring to the PhD can only do so as provisional candidates. Students will therefore complete a second confirmation milestone, with the due date set by the Graduate School to align with the expected timeframe for the new program.

At present, the PhD confirmation process for students enrolled through Psychology involves three components:

- an updated confirmation document that should include an update on progress since MPhil confirmation, an overview of how the project has increased in scope to PhD level, and a revised thesis plan and timeframe for the PhD. Students should also include a tentative budget for the annual allocation of student research support funds (currently \$1000 per year for the first 3 years of candidature)
- a set of goals and plan of work for the period leading up to mid-candidature review (12 months FTE); and
- an interview.

A seminar is not required at this time, although our students are always encouraged to seek opportunities to present their research to their academic peers and/or a wider research community.

Mid-Candidature Review

Overview

The mid-candidature review represents a mid-point between confirmation of candidature and thesis review milestones. The intent of the mid candidature milestone is to assess whether:

- 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

There are four components to the mid candidature review:

- written work;
- a brief report summarising progress against the timeline agreed to at confirmation, and set of goals and plan of work for the period leading up to thesis review – the report should also include a tentative budget for the annual allocation of student research support funds (currently \$1000 per year for the first 3 years of candidature);
- an oral presentation; and
- an interview.

The specific requirements for the written work and oral presentation will vary on a case by case basis, depending on the nature of the project. Each candidate should negotiate the requirements with the advisory team and the Chair of the milestone panel. For example, the written work might take the form of a thesis chapter, or a manuscript for publication. Whatever the precise form of the written work it must demonstrate production of work at a level consistent with that expected of a PhD/MPhil level thesis, including demonstrated knowledge of relevant background research, critical analysis of evidence, and clear exposition of research conducted by the candidate. The requirement for an oral presentation may be met by presenting a paper or poster at a conference, or by presenting a seminar within the School.

The most important component of the mid-candidature review process is the interview. The interview will examine progress that has been made since confirmation, and work that is remaining in order to complete the project. As with the confirmation interview, the interview panel may ask questions regarding any aspect of the project in order to assess the candidate's level of understanding and grasp of the topic, and to evaluate the likelihood of successful completion of the project within a reasonable time frame. The milestone panel will discuss the proposed goals and program of work with the candidate. Progress against the agreed goals and program of work will be assessed at thesis review.

Assessment

The panel will assess whether:

- Satisfactory progress has been made since confirmation;
- The project remains suitable for a PhD/MPhil;
- The candidate is capable of completing PhD/MPhil level work;
- The PhD/MPhil promises to be completed within the expected period of candidature within existing resources;
- There are any factors delaying progress; and
- The advisory team is adequate and effective.

This assessment will be made on the basis of the written work, the oral presentation (if carried out within the school), and the interview.

Procedures

The standard procedure is described below. Ideally, the entire process should be completed within 1-2 weeks of the milestone due date. Please inform the PGO about any particularly long delays.

1. The PGO monitors the due dates, and sends a courtesy reminder to the candidate and advisory team c.11 months (if PhD) or c.5 months (if MPhil) after the confirmation due date. Once it has been determined that the candidate is ready for the milestone, the Chair of the RHD Committee will appoint the Chair of the milestone panel from the members of the current RHD subcommittee. If the candidate and advisory team agree at this point that attaining the milestone by the due date is not feasible, they request an extension from the UQ Graduate School (via the PGO and PGC). If the request is approved, the PGO updates the due date.
2. The panel Chair contacts the candidate and advisory team to negotiate the requirements for written and oral work, and the date at which any written and/or oral work must be submitted, and the date at which the interview will occur.
3. The candidate submits any written work, as agreed with the Chair of the milestone panel. The work is then assessed by the panel Chair.
4. The interview takes place. If a seminar is to be given, this should occur prior to the interview. Here's a brief checklist of items to be discussed:
 - a. A quick review of the student's candidature since confirmation (dates, any major changes in advisory team, other coursework, etc.)
 - b. A discussion of the oral presentation requirement
 - c. A discussion of the written work that has been submitted for review
 - d. A review of the student's plan for the time until the next milestone
 - e. A discussion of an appropriate date for Thesis Review (based on the Graduate School timeframes outlined on page 4 of this handbook)
 - e. While the student leaves the room, the advisory team discusses with the Chair any concerns about the student's progress

- f. While the advisory team leaves the room, the student discusses with the Chair any concerns about his or her advisory team

Note: In the event that the student attempts, but is not yet able to attain this milestone, an extension of the milestone needs to be requested. The interview and all the other details here should still be followed. At the second attempt, most of these steps should be repeated.

5. The Chair prepares a written report summarising the issues, if any, that were raised during the milestone process, and the recommendation of the panel. This report and the completed milestone form should be sent to the student and the advisor for their signatures. Once signed, it should be forwarded it to the PGAO, together with a copy of the written report and the candidate's progress report: these will be kept on file within the School. The student will initiate an *Attainment of Milestone* request via the [Candidature Management Portal](#) that will be routed to the Principal Advisor and PGC for endorsement.

Thesis Review

Overview

The thesis review milestone is designed to:

- assess whether the work should be ready for assessment by the expected date; and
- identify any major concerns that need attention before submission.

It is expected that the thesis review milestone will be attempted when approximately 80% of the final thesis has been written, and submission is expected within 3 months for PhD candidates, and 6 weeks for MPhil candidates. For example, if the body of the thesis is to consist of published papers and manuscripts under review, then the candidate would be ready for thesis review when the last manuscript is in the final stages of being polished.

Work to be completed

There are four components to the thesis review:

- written work;
- a brief report summarising progress against the timeline agreed to at mid-candidature review, and set of goals and plan of work for the period leading up to thesis submission;
- a seminar; and
- an interview.

The specific requirements for the written and oral work will vary on a case by case basis, depending on the nature of the thesis. Each candidate should negotiate the requirements with the advisory team and the Chair of the milestone panel. In most cases, the written work will be a submitted or published paper, while the oral work will be a conference presentation or a school seminar.

The interview will examine progress that has been made since mid-candidature, and work that is remaining in order to complete the project. The panel and the candidate will discuss how long it will take to complete the remaining tasks, and set a date for submission of the thesis (as per the Graduate School timeframes noted above).

Assessment

The panel will assess whether:

- Satisfactory progress has been made since mid-candidature review;
- The thesis is likely to be of PhD/MPhil standard;
- The thesis will be completed within a reasonable time within existing resources;
- There are any factors delaying progress; and
- The advisory team is adequate and effective.

This assessment will be made on the basis of the written work, the oral presentation (if carried out within the school), and the interview.

Procedures

The standard procedure is described below. Ideally, the entire process should be completed within 1-2 weeks of the due date. Please inform the PGAO about any particularly long delays.

1. The PGAO monitors the due dates, and contacts the candidate and advisory team 10-11 months (if PhD) or 4-5 months (if MPhil) after the mid-candidature review due date. Once it has been determined that the candidate is ready for the milestone, the Chair of the RHD Committee will appoint the Chair of the thesis panel from the members of the current RHD subcommittee. If the candidate and advisory team agree at this point that attaining the milestone by the due date is not feasible, they request an extension from the UQ Graduate School (via the PGAO and PGC). If the request is approved, the PGAO updates the due date.
2. The Chair of the milestone panel contacts the candidate and advisory team to negotiate the requirements for written work, and the date at which any written work must be submitted, and the date at which the seminar and interview will occur.
3. The candidate submits any written work, as agreed by the Chair of the milestone panel. The work is then assessed by the panel, as agreed by the candidate, advisory team and Chair.
4. The interview takes place. Here's a brief checklist of items to be discussed:
 - a. A quick review of the student's candidature since the previous milestone (dates, any major changes in advisory team, other coursework, etc.)
 - b. A discussion of the oral presentation requirement
 - c. A discussion of the written work that has been submitted for review
 - d. A review of the student's plan for the time until submission
 - e. A review of the Graduate School's Conflict-of-interest policy (see appendix)
 - f. Discussion of the process of choosing potential examiners. Please note that the advisory team should submit this list to the PGAO in the next few weeks.
 - g. A discussion of an appropriate date for thesis submission (as per the Graduate School's requirements – 3 months for PhD, 6 weeks for MPhil).
 - h. While the student leaves the room, the advisory team discusses with the Chair any concerns about the student's progress.
 - i. While the advisory team leaves the room, the student discusses with the Chair any concerns about his or her advisory team.

Note: In the event that the student attempts, but is not yet able to attain this milestone, an extension of the milestone needs to be requested. The interview and all the other details here should still be followed. At the second attempt, most of these steps should be repeated.

5. The Chair prepares a written report summarising the issues, if any, that were raised during the milestone process, and the recommendation of the panel. This report and the completed milestone form should be sent to the student and the advisor for their signatures. Once signed, it should be forwarded it to the PGAO, together with a copy of the written report and the candidate's progress report: these will be kept on file within the School. The student will initiate an *Attainment of Milestone* request via the [Candidature Management Portal](#) that will be routed to the Principal Advisor and PGC for endorsement.

Appendix A

The following are examples of reports and emails prepared by committee members.

Sample Confirmation report

Report on PhD confirmation of Hermione Grainger

Project Title: Social engagement and older adults

Panel Chair: Cath Haslam

Hermione commenced her PhD in February 2007, and was interviewed on Thursday 08 March 2008. In attendance were her advisory team (Prof. McGonagall [Principal Advisor], Prof. Pomona Sprout [Associate Advisor]), her readers (Prof. Gilderoy Lockhart and Prof. Quirinus Quirrel), and me.

The interview was preceded by Hermione's confirmation seminar, in which she summarised the theoretical background of her proposed PhD project as well as the relatively broad research questions and methods of the five studies that are part of this project. Specifically, Hermione proposed to examine several determinants of social engagement among older adults using secondary longitudinal datasets as well as a qualitative study with focus groups. The seminar was intellectually stimulating, well-presented, and well-attended by members of the School.

It is clear that Hermione has a good understanding of the theoretical, methodological, and practical issues related to the topic. The panel members agreed that Hermione answered most of the questions by the panel and the seminar audience competently.

The panel recommended that the research questions of the five studies need to be further specified, with more concrete hypotheses proposed. In addition, the "add-on value" of each study should be outlined more explicitly so that the theoretical and practical significance is clear. The panel recommended that Hermione meets with her advisory team in the next month to discuss these issues. Furthermore the panel agreed with the suggestion of Prof. Lockhart to collect additional qualitative data on successful social engagement as part of a final study.

The panel commended Hermione's enthusiasm for working on what is an ambitious yet feasible project. It is clear that she is well prepared to complete the project to PhD standard and within the acceptable timeframe. No revision of the confirmation document is needed; however, the panel provided Hermione with several suggestions for her project that can be incorporated in the empirical papers to be written throughout the remainder of candidature.

The candidate and her advisors agreed that the advisory team is adequate and effective. Hermione advised she completed the Graduate School's Research Integrity Module on February 28. The panel members unanimously proposed that the candidate be confirmed. Hermione expects to complete her midcandidature review no later than March 2009.

Sample Midcandidature Review report

Candidate: Art Vandelay

Interview held on 11 March 2011. A/Prof H. Q. Pennypacker, his Principal Advisor, attended; his Associate Advisor (Dr Kel Varnsen) was overseas and unable to attend.

Chair of the panel: Cath Haslam

Art commenced his PhD in April 2009 and was confirmed in March 2010.

For this review, Art submitted a report of his progress to date as well as a first-authored manuscript currently under review at *Learning and Instruction*. On the basis of these documents, the panel agreed that he is well on track to complete the PhD on time. To date Art has completed four experiments of a planned set of six. Experiment 5 is in progress, with Experiment 6 to run immediately afterwards. His submitted manuscript reports the results of experiments 1 and 2, and Art plans to report his remaining experiments in at least two additional journal articles.

Art gave a successful presentation at the Australasian Experimental Psychology Conference in November 2010 and will present additional work in July 2011 at the Asian Conference in Psychology and Behavioural Sciences in Hokkaido.

Art is adhering to the timeline proposed at confirmation, despite adding an additional experiment to his thesis (Experiment 6 is a recently-added follow-up to Experiment 4), and is on track to complete data collection and analysis by January 2012, with write up completed by June 2012.

Both Art and his advisory team agreed that the advisory team is adequate and effective, with no issues of concern raised.

The panel unanimously recommended – Dr Varnsen concurred via email – Art's attainment of the Midcandidature Review milestone. He is a highly competent researcher who has the skills, resources, and motivation to complete a quality thesis in a timely manner.

Sample Thesis Review report

Candidate: Mary Richards

Interview held on 21 June 2013. Prof. Lou Grant, her Principal Advisor, and Dr Murray Slaughter, her Associate Advisor, attended.

Chair of the panel: Cath Haslam

Mary commenced her PhD in Feb 2010 and was confirmed in May 2011. She completed the mid-candidature milestone in June 2012.

As part of her Thesis Review, Mary submitted a report of her progress to date. On the basis of this document, the panel agreed that her writing and analytical skills are first-rate. Since the mid-candidature milestone, Mary has submitted three manuscripts for publication, including one that is in press at *Trends in Cognitive Science*. With respect to oral skills, Mary gave a successful presentation at the Cognitive Neuroscience Society Meeting in October 2012, as well as two other presentations in Brisbane in the past few months. In addition, Mary has begun an important collaboration with Prof. Rhoda Morgenstern (University of Minnesota) that offers exciting opportunities for Mary's career post-submission.

Mary plans to submit her thesis by end of September 2013. The procedures for nominating examiners and the university's conflict-of-interest policy regarding examiners have also been discussed.

The panel unanimously recommended Mary's attainment of the Thesis Review milestone.

Sample confirmation report where milestone is not attained

Candidate: Leslie Knope

Seminar and interview held on 7 January 2015. Prof Chris Traeger (panel Chair), Dr Ron Swanson (Principal Advisor), Prof Ethel Beavers, (Associate Advisor), and the two readers (Dr April Ludgate and Assoc Prof Tom Haverford) met with Leslie after her seminar.

Prior to the interview Leslie presented her confirmation document and research proposal, including preliminary results from data collected to date, to an audience of members of the School of Psychology. The presentation reflected Leslie's passion for her research and was well-attended, clear, and engaging, with many questions and comments from the audience. Leslie is also to be commended on her progress in terms of data collection for the project, with obtaining data from more than 300 participants for what is a large cross-sectional study. The general domain of research is of theoretical and practical importance, and of appropriate scope for a PhD.

While Leslie has some significant achievements, and the panel noted several strengths of the project as currently presented, some notable omissions and limitations in the confirmation document led the panel to recommend a 3-month extension of the milestone in order to address these issues. Specifically, the panel asked for a re-worked confirmation document incorporating the following:

- the confirmation document must not exceed the required word limit (5000 words/10 pages excluding references)
- clearer and more detailed explanations of the theoretical models being tested, which will assist with articulating hypotheses
- consideration of alternative predictions
- acknowledgement and consideration of the inherent methodological problems related to the diverse samples used in the proposed second study

It was agreed that the revised document would be sent to the panel for consideration by March 15, with a follow-up interview by April 7. The panel considered the quality of Leslie's seminar to be sufficient for the milestone, with no need for a second presentation.

Both Leslie and her advisors are happy with the composition of the advisory team in light of the needs of the project, and also reported satisfaction with the advisory relationship. A/P Haverford has also agreed to act as a possible resource person (with the potential to take an associate advisor role) for the part of the project involving attentional function.

In sum, Leslie's topic and program of studies is promising, but the panel agreed that at this stage the confirmation milestone requirements are not yet met. However, with appropriate revisions made at this point in candidature the panel agrees that the project is one that can be completed at PhD standard and within an acceptable timeframe, and as such we look forward to meeting again with Leslie in April.

Appendix B

Sample chair contact emails to student and advisory team (and readers for confirmation)

Confirmation

Dear all,

I have been appointed the Chair of XXXX's confirmation panel, which includes the members of the advisory team, the readers, and me.

XXXX, to arrange a time for confirmation seminar and interview within the next few weeks, please liaise with each of the panel members to find a 2-hour period that suits all of us. Ideally, we should aim to decide on the date and time within the next 7 days.

For me, XXXX or XXXX would work well.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Mid-Candidature

Dear XXXX,

I have been appointed the Chair of your mid-candidature review panel, which will be made up of members of your advisory team and me. According to the Graduate School's records, your mid-candidature review milestone deadline is 1 July 2017. I would like to begin the arrangements for the assessment of this milestone. There are four components to the mid-candidature review:

1. written work (e.g., a thesis chapter, manuscript of a journal article)
2. a brief report summarising your progress against the timeline agreed to at confirmation, including a set of goals and plan of work leading up to thesis review. You should also include a tentative budget for your share of your principal advisor's annual allocation of student research support funds
3. an oral presentation (e.g., a school seminar, conference presentation since your Confirmation seminar)
4. an interview

Please discuss with your advisory team the suitability of your recent work with respect to these components.

I would appreciate it if you could let me know that you have received this message within the next week. In addition, it would facilitate things if you and your advisory team got back to me within a fortnight about (a) how you will plan to fulfill the components of assessment, and (b) possible meeting times for the interview.

If you have other questions, please let me know.

Thesis Review

Dear XXXX,

I have been appointed the Chair of your Thesis Review panel, which will be made up of members of your advisory team and me. According to the Graduate School's records, your Thesis Review milestone deadline is 1 July 2014. I would like to begin the arrangements for the assessment of this milestone. There are four components to the thesis review:

1. written work (e.g., a thesis chapter, manuscript of a journal article)
2. a brief report summarising your progress since mid-candidature towards your thesis submission, including a set of goals and plan of work for this final period
3. a seminar (e.g., a school seminar, conference presentation since mid-candidature)
4. an interview

Please discuss with your advisory team the suitability of your recent work with respect to these components.

I would appreciate it if you could let me know that you have received this message within the next week. In addition, it would facilitate things if you and your advisory team got back to me within a fortnight about (a) how you will plan to fulfill the components of assessment, and (b) possible meeting times for the interview.

If you have other questions, please let me know.

Appendix C

PGAO's reminder emails to students

Confirmation:

Dear Augie Doggie,

I hope that your first year as a PhD candidate in the School of Psychology has been an enjoyable and productive one. I am writing to you because we are approaching the due date for you to complete your confirmation milestone. The first component of this milestone is the confirmation document, which should be submitted by **March 10 2017** to ensure your seminar and interview are completed as close as possible to the due date of April 1 2017.

There are four components to the confirmation process:

- the confirmation document;
- a set of goals and plan of work for the period leading up to mid-candidature review (this should be included with your confirmation document);
- a seminar;
- an interview.

The attached document provides an overview of these requirements.

The next step in the process is to let me know:

1. when you intend to submit your confirmation document; and
2. your two nominated readers for your confirmation document. Please ensure you or your advisory team approach potential readers to confirm their willingness and availability prior to nominating them. Note also that it is possible to have one associate advisor (with a <30% advisory load) as a reader.

The Chair of the RHD committee (Prof Cath Haslam) formally assigns the members of your confirmation panel, including the readers and your panel Chair, who will contact you to discuss dates for the confirmation seminar and interview.

Your panel will only be confirmed upon submission of your confirmation document, which includes the Psychology confirmation coversheet and signed statement of originality (available from the School of Psychology website: <http://www.psy.uq.edu.au/current-students/postgraduate/>) to me via email to rhadmin@psy.uq.edu.au.

In addition, you will need to complete the University's Research and Integrity Module in order to fulfil the requirements for your confirmation milestone. Please note that you must complete the module and pass the module assessment with a score of at least 80% before your milestone attainment can be processed. Please refer to the [Graduate School website](#) for instructions on accessing and completing the module.

Augie, I would appreciate your acknowledgement of the receipt of this email. Our aim is to work with all our students and their advisors to facilitate the milestone process as smoothly as possible, so in your reply please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or other information that may be relevant to your candidature. Please also let us know if you're concerned you won't be able to attain the milestone by the due date. Depending on your circumstances, you can request an extension for the milestone (3 months FTE) without having a panel meeting.

You are most welcome to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information.

Kind regards

Alison

***the mid-candidature and thesis review milestones also include the relevant information for each milestone that appears earlier in this handbook (pp. 10-12 for MCR, pp. 13- 14 for TR)**

Mid-candidature review:

Dear Student Formerly Known as Prince,

I hope that the past year since your confirmation has been a productive and enjoyable time for you. I am writing because our records indicate that your mid-candidature review milestone is due soon – **8 January** – which is 12 months since the due date for your confirmation milestone (factoring in any approved periods of leave, changes to study load or program, or extensions).

We should aim to complete all components of your mid-candidature review within 1-2 weeks of the due date – an overview of the process and what's required to successfully complete it is attached. What will happen next is that when you confirm you're ready to proceed with the milestone, Cath will assign a member of the RHD committee to be the Chair of your panel. The Chair of your panel will subsequently contact you about scheduling a date for this review.

I would appreciate your acknowledgement of the receipt of this email. Our aim is to work with all our students and their advisors to facilitate the milestone process as smoothly as possible, so in your reply please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or other information that may be relevant to your candidature. Please also let us know if you're concerned you won't be able to attain the milestone by the due date. Depending on your circumstances, you can request an extension for the milestone (3 months FTE) without having a panel meeting.

Thanks and kind regards
Alison

Thesis review:

Dear Fleagle,

I hope that the last 12 months in the School have been a productive and enjoyable time for you. I am writing because our records indicate that your thesis review milestone is due soon – **13 February**, which is 12 months since the due date for your midcandidature milestone (factoring in any approved periods of leave, changes to study load or program, or extensions). We should aim to have all components of the milestone completed within 1-2 weeks of the due date.

An overview of the review process and what's required to successfully complete it is attached. What will happen next is that when you confirm you're ready to proceed with the milestone, Cath will assign a member of the RHD committee to be the Chair of your panel. The Chair of your panel will subsequently contact you about scheduling a date for this review.

I would appreciate your acknowledgement of the receipt of this email. Our aim is to work with all our students and their advisors to facilitate the milestone process as smoothly as possible, so in your reply please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or other information that may be relevant to your candidature. Please also let us know if you're concerned you won't be able to attain the milestone by the due date. Depending on your circumstances, you can request an extension for the milestone without having a panel meeting.

Kind regards,
Alison

Appendix D

The University of Queensland guidelines on conflict of interest in thesis examinations

Overview

The University of Queensland guidelines on thesis examination COI align with the Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles. An overview of the COI guidelines has been developed and is available for students and staff at <https://graduate-school.uq.edu.au/sites/graduate-school.uq.edu.au/files/ckfinder/files/Current-students/coi.pdf>

Key things to note are:

- A conflict of interest may be with the institution, the advisor or the candidate
- The existence of a conflict of interest does not automatically preclude a nominee being approved by the Dean of the UQ Graduate School as a thesis examiner. When considering a nominee, the Dean looks at the nature and severity of any conflict(s) of interest.
- The aim of the COI guidelines is to protect the candidate, examiner and the university against potential negative perceptions during the thesis examination process. It is not a presumption that an individual will behave inappropriately.
- When in doubt, declare: if a potential conflict of interest is not declared by the School, candidate or examiner but discovered during or after the examination, the Grad School may (and they have) annul one or both examiners' reports and appoint a replacement examiner.
- A potential COI doesn't automatically preclude a nominee being approved by the Dean of the Graduate School as a thesis examiner if it is considered the declared relationship will not compromise the independence of the examiner in reaching their decision.

The Graduate School has provided the following examples as a non-exhaustive guide to conflicts that should be declared:

Relationships that would normally exclude a potential examiner include:

WORKING

- Examiner is in negotiation to directly employ or be employed by the candidate or advisor
- Examiner was a candidate of the advisor within the past 5 years;
- Examiner has directly employed or been employed by the advisor or candidate within the past 5 years

PERSONAL/LEGAL:

- Examiner is legally family or known relative to the advisor or candidate or is a legal guardian or has power of attorney for the advisor or candidate

BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL:

- Examiner is currently in or has had a business relationship with the candidate or advisor in the last 5 years (for example, partner in a business or employment);
- Examiner has a direct commercial interest in the outcomes of the research.

OTHER:

- Examiner has a formal grievance with UQ
- Examiner is a current academic member of staff at UQ or has a current Honorary, Adjunct or Emeritus position or is an Academic Title holder (Medicine) with UQ.

Working relationships with the examiner to be declared on the Nomination of Thesis Examiners form for assessment and which may in some cases lead to exclusion as an examiner include (indicative, non-exhaustive examples only):

- Examiner has co-authored a paper with the candidate or advisor within the last 5 years;
- Examiner has worked with the candidate on matters regarding the thesis e.g. previous member of the advisory team;
- Examiner has employed the candidate or advisor or been employed by the candidate or advisor within the last 5 years;
- Examiner has acted as referee for the candidate or advisor for employment
- Examiner has co-supervised with the advisor in the past five years;
- Examiner holds a patent with the advisor granted no more than 8 years ago and which is still in force;
- Examiner holds a current grant with the advisor.

Appendix E

Student grievance resolution

Overview

The most useful resource for RHD students (and also RHD subcommittee members) is the University's student grievance resolution policy: the full policy, procedures, and guidelines are available at <http://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.60.02-student-grievance-resolution>. Information for students is also available from the myAdvisor website (<http://www.uq.edu.au/myadvisor/grievance-resolution>), with additional resources and information provided by the University's Equity Office (<http://www.uq.edu.au/equity/student-grievances>). [The University of Queensland Student Union](#) also provides independent advice and assistance.

The aim is to resolve most matters of concern to RHD candidates informally and at the local level, where appropriate. As such, in the first instance students who are experiencing any concerns or problems with any aspect of their candidature should, wherever possible, discuss the situation with their advisory team and attempt to reach a solution. Students also have an opportunity during the milestone interview to discuss any issues or concerns with their panel Chair, and throughout their candidature with either the PGC or PGO (depending on the issue).

Many/most issues can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction at that level, but there remain instances where a student is dissatisfied with the decision made in relation to their grievance. In such cases they are entitled to appeal to the next most senior decision maker: in the event it's not possible to reach a solution with the advisory team, students should then seek advice and assistance from the PGC. If the PGC cannot help resolve the situation, the student should consult the Head of School. If the issue remains unresolved the student should then approach the Dean of the UQ Graduate School for assistance.

The information above refers to academic and administrative concerns. If a student concern relates to discrimination, harassment and bullying or sexual harassment, the University has specific policies and procedures to handle issues relating to these areas. For information please refer to <http://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/1.70.06-discrimination-and-harassment> and <http://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/1.70.02-prevention-sexual-harassment>.