

# RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE PROGRESS PROCEDURE

<b>Policy Hierarchy Link</b>	Research Higher Degree Student Policy			
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<b>Contact Officer</b>	Registrar			
<b>Superseded Documents</b>	Research Higher Degree Progress Procedure version 1.4			
<b>Associated Documents</b>	Academic Appeals Policy Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Research Non-academic Grievance Policy Research Higher Degree Supervision Procedure Research Higher Degree Thesis Examination Procedure Student Code of Conduct			
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## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This procedure describes the processes for monitoring and reviewing the progress of Research Higher Degree (RHD) candidates. It applies to all candidates undertaking a RHD program at Moore Theological College, supervisors and other positions responsible for the management of RHD programs.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Candidate	A student currently enrolled in a RHD program.
Commencement of candidature	When candidature is confirmed, then the period of candidature will normally be deemed to have begun from the date of commencement of the first semester following approval of provisional candidature.
HoD	Head of an academic department of Moore College
MTC	Moore College
RC	Moore College Research Committee
RHD	Research Higher Degree
RHD Program	A postgraduate program for which the main component is an independent research thesis (as defined under levels 9 and 10 of the Australian Qualifications Framework).
Show Cause	A candidate may be asked to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated in cases where there has been unsatisfactory research progress. Show cause is a process that provides an opportunity for the candidate to raise any issues that may have affected progress. These may include but are not limited to personal, technical and academic issues. Candidates may also be asked to show cause in cases of lapsed candidature.
WHS	Workplace, Health and Safety

## 3. PROCEDURE

### 3.1 Expected duration of candidature

A doctoral candidate will be expected to present his or her thesis for examination within four years (eight semesters) (FTE) of the date of the commencement of candidature in the course, excluding periods of approved leave or absence.

A research masters candidate will be expected to present his or her thesis for examination within two years (four semesters) (FTE) of the date of the commencement of candidature in the course, excluding periods of approved leave or absence.

Variations to requirements regarding periods of minimum and maximum candidacy may be approved by the RC if exceptional circumstances apply, but only on the recommendation of the Director of Research.

Periods of leave or absence of up to one year (two semesters) may be approved by the Primary Supervisor in consultation with the Director of Research. Longer periods are

normally not granted but in special circumstances may be considered by the RC on the recommendation of the Primary Supervisor.

A candidate may not defer enrolment in the first six months of candidature. A maximum of twelve months deferral in total is permitted during the normal course of a research higher degree.

### **3.2 Expected progress**

Candidates are expected to make satisfactory progress throughout their course, meeting the expected milestones in a timely manner and completing their course within the relevant course duration period. It is the responsibility of candidates to be aware of the expected milestones within their course. See Appendix for sample milestone plans.

Supervisors and the RC are expected to be aware of the candidate's progress, to monitor, review and record the candidate's progress and to provide feedback to the candidate on his/her progress in a timely manner.

### **3.3 Purpose of reviewing progress**

All RHD candidates, whether full-time or part-time, must have their research progress reviewed once per year for the duration of their candidacy. A formal Review Panel will conduct the review. The result will be an Annual Progress Report for the candidate.

The purpose of the review is:

- to provide an independent and objective assessment of progress
- to provide affirmation of the candidate's progress where that is applicable
- to provide an opportunity for the candidate to raise any matters of concern with respect to his or her research or supervision
- to provide support in developing a research plan and for the period up to the next annual review

Continued re-enrolment in each year of a research degree is conditional upon undergoing an Annual Progress Review.

### **3.4 Review process**

#### **3.4.1 Responsibility for reviews**

The Director of Research is responsible for the scheduling and conduct of the Annual Progress Review Panels.

#### **3.4.2 Candidate responsibilities prior to review**

In preparation for the review the candidate is required to provide:

- a completed Annual Progress Report form (completed in consultation with the supervisor);
- an outline of achievements since the last annual review against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones;
- an outline of key objectives/criteria and milestones to be achieved by the next annual review;
- a timeline and milestones for completion of the thesis;
- if appropriate, a table of contents for the thesis together with completion status of each chapter; and
- any requirements specific to the Department in which the research is undertaken.

### 3.4.3 Annual Progress Review Panel composition

The Panel will consist of at least two academic members of the RC who are not the candidate's supervisors, plus other panelists with relevant expertise if and as required. The Director of Research, or the Head of an Academic Department of the College, normally chairs the Review Panel.

The candidate and supervisor should be informed of the panel membership prior to the meeting by the Director of Research.

A candidate may advise the Director of Research of any persons he or she wishes to be included or excluded from the panel. These wishes may or may not be acted upon. However, any issues relating to panel membership including reasons for objections will be recorded.

The candidate may request the presence of a faculty member of their own gender at the Panel meeting.

### 3.4.4 Annual Progress Review meeting

An Annual Progress Review panel meeting consists of three parts:

1. with both the candidate and his or her supervisor present
2. with the candidate present and the supervisor excluded
3. with the supervisor present and the candidate excluded

The format of an Annual Progress Review panel meeting and the issues discussed varies with each candidate. However key issues to be covered include:

- Intellectual Property, WHS, and Ethical Conduct of Research – both the candidate and the supervisors should understand these policy requirements as they relate to each research project;
- resources – are they adequate and appropriate for the research?
- the role of the candidate's supervisors – 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;
- progress of the research;
- any problems (pastoral, technical or academic) identified by either the candidate or the supervisors. The HoD and Director of Research must be consulted, particularly if appointment of a new supervisor is contemplated;
- an assessment of whether progress has been at the level expected for the stage of enrolment in candidature;
- key research objectives/criteria and milestones for the next review;
- anticipated thesis submission date – this date should take into account the census dates (31 March and 31 August);
- skills development – assessment of whether additional skills and training are required and a development plan;
- any other issues that the Panel considers relevant; and
- the date of next Annual Progress Review.

### 3.4.5 Confirmation of Candidature Process (PhD)

1. A successful applicant to the PhD program will commence in Preliminary Candidature. The conditions of Preliminary Candidature may also include any or all of the following components:
  - satisfactory completion of any specified coursework units;
  - ancient or modern foreign language acquisition;
  - participation in specified research or postgraduate seminars;

- completion of a literature review/synopsis of literature or other preliminary research paper(s);
  - presentation of a seminar; and
  - other additional conditions specified by the RC.
2. During Preliminary Candidature (normally within the first year fulltime), the PhD candidate must undergo a Confirmation of Candidacy process. The candidate will submit a research proposal of approximately 10,000 words, covering the following points:
    - the nature, scope, and goals of the proposed research topic;
    - a survey of the major scholarly works with which the research will engage;
    - an appropriate methodology for achieving the goals of the research; and
    - the identification of a potential original contribution to knowledge.
  3. The research proposal will be distributed to the Confirmation of Candidature Panel, consisting of at least three qualified (PhD) faculty members and any other qualified persons who might be invited to participate in its evaluation. The Panel will be chaired by either the Director of Research or relevant Head of Department.
  4. The PhD candidate will give an oral presentation to the Panel, summarising the research proposal, answering questions, and receiving feedback.
  5. The PhD candidate will leave the room, and the Panel will discuss the merits of the proposal to determine whether the candidate has a viable thesis on the basis of the research proposal and the presentation.
  6. The Panel will determine whether the research proposal and oral presentation demonstrate (1) a viable thesis topic and robust methodology; and (2) an original contribution to knowledge. On this basis, the Panel will make one of the following recommendations to the Director of Research:
    - (a) that Full Candidature be confirmed; or
    - (b) that Full Candidature be confirmed pending minor adjustments to the satisfaction of the Head of Department and Director of Research; or
    - (c) that Preliminary Candidature be maintained, but the RHD candidate be invited to undergo a second round of Confirmation of Candidature (PhD).
  7. If a second round of Confirmation of Candidature is recommended, it must ordinarily occur within three months of the first round. In such a case, the PhD candidate will rework the research proposal in accordance with recommendations from the Panel. The candidate will then resubmit the research proposal and give a second oral presentation within the three months.
  8. A second round of Confirmation Candidature will follow the same process as outlined above (Points 2–5). The Panel will then make one of the following recommendations to the Director of Research:
    - (d) that Full Candidature be confirmed; or
    - (e) that Full Candidature be confirmed pending minor adjustments to the satisfaction of the Head of Department and Director of Research; or

(f) that Full Candidature not be confirmed, and the PhD candidate be asked to show cause for continued enrolment in the degree.

9. Confirmation of Candidature is dependent on the recommendation of both the Confirmation of Candidature Panel and the Annual Progress Review Panel.

### **3.5 Review outcomes**

#### **3.5.1 Responsibility for review outcomes**

The Director of Research is responsible for coordinating the implementation of review outcomes.

#### **3.5.2 Review recommendations**

After each candidate's Annual Progress Review the Panel may recommend one of the following outcomes to the RC:

1. Continuation of Candidacy

A recommendation of continuation of candidacy is when progress is considered satisfactory either since commencement or against the milestones set over the period since the last review. Continuation is also recommended where any applicable issues raised at the last review have been dealt with satisfactorily.

Key objectives and milestones should have been agreed for the next Annual Progress Review.

2. Provisional Continuation of Candidacy

Where progress is marginal provisional continuation of candidacy pending a further review at a specified date may be recommended. Progress will be reassessed against agreed objectives/milestones at an interim review within the next one to six months. The date and assessment criteria will be provided to the candidate and supervisors in writing. A recommendation of provisional continuation may also be given when identifying issues that may be hindering the candidate's progress. In such cases detailed milestones should be set and remedial actions developed to deal with the hindering issues (see 3.6).

In the case of doctoral candidates where significant concerns continue following the interim review the Panel may recommend transfer of candidacy to the MTh program.

3. Discontinuation of Candidacy

A recommendation of discontinuation of candidacy is given when progress is poor. It may indicate that the candidate is currently unsuited to research.

Where discontinuation of candidacy is recommended the Panel will document the basis of its decision. The candidate will be requested by the RC to show cause why his or her candidature should not be terminated for the reasons that have been outlined to the candidate and the supervisors in writing. A request to show cause is a serious recommendation. This would normally occur following a recommendation of provisional continuation and subsequent failure to meet objectives and milestones at the interim review (see 3.7)

### **3.6 Provisional and unsatisfactory outcomes**

#### **3.6.1 Remedial action**

If an Annual Progress Review Panel identifies unsatisfactory progress the Panel review meeting should identify and document any factors contributing to a lack of progress. These

factors may lie with the topic, the supervisors, the candidate or in other areas including, access to resources or a combination of these.

The Panel should outline remedial strategies to address these issues. In some instances it may be more appropriate for the Director of Research or the HoD to make these recommendations. The Director of Research should provide objectives and milestones based on these strategies to the candidate and the supervisors in writing after confirmation by the RC. The Academic Department 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. If the remedial action does not result in satisfactory progress after a three-month period the continuation of candidature must be referred to the RC.

### **3.6.2 Termination**

Termination of candidature due to unsatisfactory progress is a serious academic decision that is taken only rarely. Candidature may be terminated by the RC on the recommendation of a Review Panel. The decision is then reported to the Academic Board and all such decisions are monitored by the Academic Dean.

### **3.6.3 Non-research related issues**

Where pastoral or person matters impact on progress the candidate may be advised to transfer to a part-time program or seek approval for a period of deferment.

### **3.6.4 Candidate appeal**

Candidates may appeal against a recommendation of discontinuation of their candidacy to the Director of Research within 21 days of receiving notification. The conditions of the Academic Appeals Policy and Academic Appeals Procedure apply.

## **3.7 Show cause**

A candidate will be required to show cause in writing if a recommendation of discontinuation of candidacy is given. This would normally occur following a recommendation of provisional continuation and subsequent failure to meet objectives and milestones at the interim review.

### **3.7.1 Show cause process**

The Review Panel must inform the candidate and supervisor that it will be making a recommendation of show cause to the RC. This should occur at the completion of the interim review. The Review Panel should also inform the candidate of the show cause process.

The Director of Research will provide all documentation for the RC to review. Documentation will include all reports relating to research progress, remedial actions advised and all outcomes, the Review Panel's reasons for recommending show cause.

The RC has responsibility for considering the recommendation of show cause from the Review Panel.

If the RC confirms the recommendation the Director of Research will inform the candidate in writing and with reasons that they are required to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated.

The candidate is required to respond to the RC within 21 days of receiving the notification.

- If the RC is satisfied with the response, milestones will be set for the following three-month period in collaboration with the supervisors. At the end of the three month period the RC will require a report from the supervisor as to whether the candidate will be approved to continue candidature or have candidature terminated.

- If the RC is not satisfied with the response the RC will recommend to the Academic Board that candidature be terminated. The Director of Research will advise the candidate in writing.

### 3.7.2 Show cause as part of lapsed candidature

Lapsed candidature occurs when a candidate is absent without approval. Progress may be deemed unsatisfactory due to lapsed candidature. The candidate may be asked to show cause why his or her candidature should be continued.

### 3.7.3 Show cause due to failure to undergo review process

Where a candidate fails to undergo an Annual Progress Review scheduled in accordance with policy and procedure, the candidate may be asked to show cause why his or her candidature should be continued.

## 3.8 Issues to do with supervision

In the event that a Primary Supervisor or Associate Supervisor is unable to supervise a candidate for an extended period of time (e.g., leave), the Secondary Supervisor shall act as requisite Supervisor for that period. If a Primary Supervisor or Associate Supervisor becomes unavailable to continue supervision, the RC shall appoint a requisite replacement on the recommendation of the relevant HoD. Until this is done, another member of the candidate's supervisory team (e.g., Secondary Supervisor) or the Director of Research will automatically assume responsibility for the candidate. If required, a replacement secondary supervisor shall also be appointed. The Secondary Supervisor or the Director of Research will assume responsibility for any matters to do with supervision that the Review Panel feels unable to deal with.

## 3.9 Documentation of reviews

All reviews and outcomes will be documented and maintained on the candidate's student file by the Registrar.

## 4. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Endorsed by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1.0	Principal	09/05/2014	09/05/2014	New procedure
1.1	Principal	04/12/2015	04/12/2015	Replace Dean of Research with Director of Postgraduate Studies
1.2	Principal	05/12/2018	05/12/2018	1. Replace Director of Postgraduate Studies with Director of Research throughout. 2. Update name of Academic Appeals Policy. 3. Section 3.6.4. Specify the appeals mechanisms. 4. Update next review date. 5. Add <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> as a reference document
1.3	Principal	06/09/2019	06/09/2019	Section 3.6.2 Termination is approved by RACC.
1.4	Principal	12/03/2021	12/03/2021	1. Update Definitions table: Research and Centres Committee to Research Committee. 2. Add to 3.4.3 "plus other panelists with relevant expertise if and as required."

				3. Update RACC to RC throughout.
1.5	Principal	23/06/2022	23/06/2022	1. Update and clarification of 3.4.5 Confirmation of Candidature Process (PhD), as approved by RC. 2. Adjusted parameters for replacement of supervisors at 3.8.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Australian National University. *Progress Milestones*. <https://www.anu.edu.au/sas/hdr/milestone.php>

University of Melbourne. *Graduate Research Progress Procedure (MPF1264) Version 1.0*  
5 December 2013.

University of New South Wales. *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidates Procedure Version 1.0 Effective 23 October 2012*.

## 6. APPENDIX – SAMPLE MILESTONE PLANS

<b>Doctoral Candidate</b>		
A candidate will be expected to present his or her thesis for examination within four years (FTE) from the commencement of candidature excluding any periods of approved leave. As a guideline the thesis might be 100,000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices) and comprise approximately 6 – 8 chapters plus introduction and conclusion.		
Milestone	Time Period	Activity
<b>During Year 1 (or FTE)</b>		
Commencement	Up to the first six months	1. Plan research with supervisors, including bibliography, draft aims and objectives, methodology and prepare a preliminary structure of thesis 2. Determine any gaps in knowledge and develop a proposal to address gaps 3. Commence literature review 4. Submit ethics clearance if applicable
Confirmation of candidacy review	Within first 12 months	1. Submit a 10,000-word research proposal demonstrating scope, methodology, and original contribution 2. Give presentation to departmental panel, and answer questions from the panel 3. Implement feedback from panel
General		Attend postgraduate seminars Make substantial progress in gathering material Write draft of approximately 15,000 words
Annual Review of Progress	At 12 months	Including report on research progress and annual plan for the period up to the next annual review.
<b>During Year 2 (or FTE)</b>		
		Attend postgraduate seminars Substantial progress in literature review Continue progress in gathering material Develop theoretical grounding with draft chapters
		Complete a partial draft of chapters

		Complete at least one chapter to final standard
Annual Review of Progress	At 24 months	Including report on research progress and annual plan for the period up to the next annual review. Annual plan should include a schedule for completion.
<b>During Year 3 (or FTE)</b>		
		Attend postgraduate seminars Reading to cover new literature in the area and identify any gaps in literature review Substantial completion of gathering material Complete draft chapters to a reasonable standard
		Reading to cover new literature and to fill knowledge gaps essential to the completion of the thesis Completion of full draft thesis
Annual Review of Progress	At 36 months	Including report on research progress and annual plan for the period up to the next annual review.
<b>During Year 4 (or FTE)</b>		
		Attend postgraduate seminars Request for extension of candidature if required Final writing and editing of thesis
Oral presentation	6 months before submission	Presentation of research material at Graduate Seminar. Expect to demonstrate: 1. Independent command of the material 2. Ability to articulate clearly and concisely an analysis of the material and research findings 3. Ability to accept constructive comment and criticism and respond appropriately
		Submission of thesis

### Research Masters Candidate

A candidate will be expected to present his or her thesis for examination within two years (FTE) from the commencement of candidature excluding any periods of approved leave.

As a guideline the thesis might be 30-50,000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices) and comprise approximately 3 – 5 chapters plus introduction and conclusion.

Milestone	Time Period	Activity
<b>Up to Year 1 (or FTE)</b>		
Commencement	Up to the first six months	1. Plan research with supervisors, including bibliography, draft aims and objectives, methodology and prepare a preliminary structure of thesis 2. Determine any gaps in knowledge and develop a proposal to address gaps 3. Commence literature review 4. Submit ethics clearance if applicable
Confirmation of Candidacy and Annual Review of Progress	At 12 months	1. Provide report on research progress and plan for the period up to submission. 2. Demonstrate sufficient progress with viable topic, scope, and methodology.
General		Attend postgraduate seminars Substantial reading for the topic Substantial progress in gathering material Write draft of approximately 15,000 words

<b>Up to Year 1.5 (or FTE)</b>		
		Attend postgraduate seminars Complete theoretical grounding with draft chapters Complete reading for the topic and incorporate literature review into the draft thesis Complete preliminary draft with at least two chapters to final standard
<b>Up to Year 2 (or FTE)</b>		
		Attend postgraduate seminars Request for extension of candidature if required Final writing and editing of thesis
		Submission of thesis