

# RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE PROGRESS PROCEDURE

|                              |   |                    |                      |                       |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Policy Hierarchy Link</b> | Research Higher Degree Student Policy   |                    |                      |                       |
| <b>Responsible Officer</b>   | Director of Research  |                    |                      |                       |
| <b>Contact Officer</b>       | Registrar   |                    |                      |                       |
| <b>Superseded Documents</b>  | Research Higher Degree Progress Procedure version 1.1 (Dec 2015)  |                    |                      |                       |
| <b>Associated Documents</b>  | Academic Appeals Policy<br>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research<br>Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Research<br>Non-academic Grievance Policy<br>Research Higher Degree Supervision Procedure<br>Research Higher Degree Thesis Examination Procedure<br>Student Code of Conduct |                    |                      |                       |
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| 1.3                          | Principal   | Academic Board     | 06/09/2019           | 06/09/2019            |

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## 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This procedure describes the processes for monitoring and reviewing the progress of RHD candidates. It applies to all candidates undertaking a Research Higher Degree program at Moore 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  |
| RACC                        | Moore College Research and Centres 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 RACC 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 RACC 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 RACC 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 RACC who are not the candidate's supervisors. 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 Review of provisional candidature**

1. Admission to the PhD program shall be on a provisional basis unless otherwise determined by the RACC. Following admission candidates will be reviewed at 6 months at which time they will present a research proposal to the Panel and an update of progress on their research.

2. The conditions of provisional 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 RACC.
  
3. Confirmation of candidacy is subject to satisfactory progress at the first Annual Progress Review 6 months after the commencement of candidature. A confirmation of candidacy review consists of all of the requirements for an Annual Progress Review plus submission of a research proposal and oral presentation of that proposal to the supervisory panel. If candidature is not confirmed the RACC may request the student to transfer to the MTh program.
  
4. A research proposal should include the following;
  - topic;
  - statement of problem/question;
  - statement of possible contribution to the field;
  - outline of conceptual framework within which the problem/question is to be addressed;
  - proposed research (including key objectives and milestones);
  - methodology and parameters;
  - requirements for HREC approval of the proposed research (if any);
  - a 'literature survey' or 'synopsis of literature' which would be at least a first draft of a chapter of the thesis as a basis for a preliminary bibliography; and
  - tentative outline (including a table of contents) of thesis and timeline for completion

### **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 RACC:

##### **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 RACC 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 recommends 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 RACC. 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 RACC.

### 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 RACC 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 RACC. 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 RACC 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 RACC has responsibility for considering the recommendation of show cause from the Review Panel.

If the RACC 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 RACC within 21 days of receiving the notification.

- If the RACC 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 RACC will require a report from the supervisor as to whether the candidate will be approved to continue candidature or have candidature terminated.
- If the RACC is not satisfied with the response the RACC 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 is unable to supervise a candidate for an extended period of time, the approved joint supervisor shall act as Primary Supervisor for that period. In the event that a Primary Supervisor becomes unavailable to continue supervision, the RACC shall appoint a replacement Primary Supervisor on the recommendation of the relevant HoD. Until this is done, the Director of Research will automatically assume responsibility for the candidate.

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.<br>2. Update name of Academic Appeals Policy.<br>3. Section 3.6.4. Specify the appeals mechanisms.<br>4. Update next review date.<br>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.   |

## 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>  |                            |   |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| <p>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.</p> <p>As a guideline the thesis might be 100,000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices) and comprise approximately 6 – 8 chapters plus introduction and conclusion.</p> |                            |   |
| <b>Milestone</b>   | <b>Time Period</b>         | <b>Activity</b>   |
| <b>During Year 1 (or FTE)</b>  |                            |   |
| Commencement   | Up to the first six months | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan research with supervisors, including bibliography, draft aims and objectives, methodology and prepare a preliminary structure of thesis</li> <li>2. Determine any gaps in knowledge and develop a proposal to address gaps</li> <li>3. Commence literature review</li> <li>4. Submit ethics clearance if applicable</li> </ol> |
| Confirmation of candidacy review   | At 6 months                | Present the following at the review: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of research progress</li> <li>2. Research proposal</li> <li>3. Research plan for next 6 months up to annual review</li> </ol>   |
|  |                            | Attend postgraduate seminars<br>Make substantial progress in gathering material<br>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<br>Substantial progress in literature review<br>Continue progress in gathering material<br>Develop theoretical grounding with draft chapters   |
|  |                            | Complete a partial draft of chapters<br>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<br>Reading to cover new literature in the area and identify any gaps in literature review<br>Substantial completion of gathering material<br>Complete draft chapters to a reasonable standard  |
|  |                            | Reading to cover new literature and to fill knowledge gaps essential to the completion of the thesis<br>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<br>Final writing and editing of thesis   |
| Oral presentation | 6 months before submission | Presentation of research material at Graduate Seminar.<br>Expect to demonstrate:<br>1. Independent command of the material<br>2. Ability to articulate clearly and concisely an analysis of the material and research findings<br>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<br>2. Determine any gaps in knowledge and develop a proposal to address gaps<br>3. Commence literature review<br>4. Submit ethics clearance if applicable |
| Confirmation of candidacy review | At 6 months                | Present the following at the review:<br>1. Review of research progress<br>2. Research proposal<br>3. Research plan for next 6 months up to annual review  |
|                                  |                            | Attend postgraduate seminars<br>Substantial reading for the topic<br>Substantial progress in gathering material<br>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 submission.  |
| <b>Up to Year 1.5 (or FTE)</b>   |                            |   |
|                                  |                            | Attend postgraduate seminars<br>Complete theoretical grounding with draft chapters<br>Complete reading for the topic and incorporate literature review into the draft thesis<br>Complete preliminary draft with at least two chapters to final standard   |
| <b>Up to Year 2 (or FTE)</b>     |                            |   |
|                                  |                            | Attend postgraduate seminars<br>Request for extension of candidature if required<br>Final writing and editing of thesis   |
|                                  |                            | Submission of thesis  |