CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION
All candidates must complete the Confirmation of Candidature within the first year of enrolment.

Confirmation of Candidature is a formal and comprehensive process that reviews the progress and plan of your candidature from commencement to completion. The process may identify improvements that can be made and it is an opportunity to provide you with feedback about your progress.

The Confirmation of Candidature tests the proposal, research theme or question to be explored; intellectual context; research objectives and research procedures within the framework of the expectations of the degree and the available time frame.

RULES
• All candidates must complete the Confirmation of Candidature within the first year of enrolment.
• Postgraduate Essentials must be completed prior to Confirmation of Candidature.
• Human Ethics applications cannot be submitted until the Confirmation of Candidature has been successfully completed.
• The Confirmation of Candidature must be successfully achieved for enrolment in the second year.

TIMING OF CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE
Your Confirmation of Candidature should be completed within the first six months of your candidature for full-time students. 12 months is the outside limit, not the norm, even for part-timers. The driver is not the policy stated date limit (which only provides the outer limit) but what is good for your candidature.

The affirmation of a Confirmation of Candidature is a signal to proceed with your research and allows you to submit any ethics applications. Delays beyond six months can impede your progress and may have a deleterious effect on the progress of your candidature. Some candidatures associated with funded projects may conduct the Confirmation even earlier.

The Confirmation of Candidature should be seen as a living document in that they are reviewed as part of your Annual Progress Report and your plans may change as your research develops.

BUDGETING
Budgets are required at Confirmation of Candidature to ensure that candidates and supervisors consider how candidature support funds may benefit the candidature. Candidates can also apply for funds at other times.

CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE DOCUMENT
There is capacity for individual initiative and variations in research style, however, the following elements must be included in your document:

Thesis Title
This should be clear, informative and unambiguous.

Research Case
This section is to demonstrate that you understand the research theme or question and are able to define the theme/question in terms that indicate that the research will provide insights into its resolution.

The Research Case should include an outline of:
1. A description of the project as a whole
2. A thesis statement, comprising:
   • The proposition(s) that the thesis will demonstrate
   • A description of the main focus of the thesis
   • A description of how the various themes/questions are interrelated
   • A demonstration of the worthiness of the proposed research with respect to gaps or conflicts in present knowledge or understanding
Intellectual Context
This section should contain:

- A detailed discussion of the conceptual and empirical aspects of the research
- A comprehensive and critical literature review related to the problem situation
- An explanation of how the thesis is related to the literature or other research in the discipline
- Account should be given of the theory(ies) that will be considered and the method(s) that will be employed in selecting, organising and analysing the material that will make-up the main body of the thesis
- Likely sources of information, archival resources, field work, survey and other empirical data which will be necessary
- A topical outline and the general content by areas or by chapter, with description and relationship of each to the others may be included
- The expected contribution of the thesis to the advancement of knowledge in the relevant field of study

Research Outcomes
This section should clearly demonstrate that you have identified a potentially solvable or resolvable research proposal and has a plan of action whereby this will be achieved within the required time frame. It may be in the form of a general statement and/or a list of more specific aims that will lead to accomplishing the general objective.

Research Method
This section should set out the logical steps to be followed in meeting the research objective(s). The method should be set forth including an expression of why it is important to the particular research field and how the method will generate and verify the conclusions reached in the thesis.

You should include a time line of expected progress and milestones to be achieved.

LENGTH OF DOCUMENT
Confirmation of Candidature documents vary in length according to the requirements of the topic and the discipline area. Most are from 3,000 to 5,000 words, with a minimum of 2,000 and maximum of 10,000.

You should discuss a suitable length with your principal supervisor.

CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE PRESENTATIONS
Your Confirmation of Candidature should be “open”. That is, people outside the advisory committee may attend, such as fellow candidates and School or Institute staff. Some Schools or Institutes may require your Confirmation of Candidature to be undertaken as part of other activities such as School or Institute conferences. The audience members do not contribute to the assessment of the candidature.

The benefit of an open Confirmation presentation is that you will receive a wider input of ideas and you may enjoy the opportunity to present your work to your peers and senior researchers. The experience may even spark interest in your research beyond your supervisory panel.

The meeting
The Confirmation of Candidature meeting is chaired by the School or Institute HDR Director or equivalent and should take from one to one and a half hours.

The format of the meeting will be at the discretion of the Chair, but usually the candidate will give an oral overview of the Confirmation document for approximately 15 minutes and this will be followed by a question and answer session where both you and the committee may ask questions.

You may be asked to leave the room for a few minutes while the committee confers and gathers their thoughts.

FEEDBACK
You will be given preliminary feedback directly at the meeting.

The advisory committee will complete a report to be signed by the committee chair and principal supervisor. If the School or Institute HDR Director is not on the Committee, the report will be forwarded to them.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES
There are six possible outcomes of the Confirmation of Candidature process:

A Candidature is confirmed.
B Candidature is confirmed subject to minor amendments/rewriting identified by the Confirmation of Candidature Advisory Committee. These amendments are to be undertaken to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor and the HDR Director, or equivalent.
C Candidature to be confirmed subject to major amendments/rewriting identified by the Confirmation of Candidature Advisory Committee. The amendments will be circulated electronically to the Advisory Committee (a second presentation is not required).
D Candidature is not confirmed on the basis of the submitted thesis proposal.
and the candidate is asked to resubmit a new proposal with a second presentation required.

E Candidature is not confirmed and it is recommended that the School/Research Institute Research and Higher Degrees Committee consider transfer of the candidature to a Masters (Hons), if applicable.

F Candidature to be reviewed by the School/Research Institute Research and Higher Degrees Committee to consider recommending that the candidate be invited to show cause why the candidature should not be terminated.

A copy of the written report given to the candidate, together with the signed coversheet should be lodged with the Graduate Research School. A copy of the confirmation document should be lodged with the School or Institute.

It may be recommended that you seek assistance with writing, presentation skills and/or analytic tools.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Confirmation of Candidature advisory committee is not the same as the supervisory panel. Additional expertise should always be included, whether from inside the School or Research Institute or through other research institutions or relevant industry collaborators.

**ETHICS APPLICATIONS**

The Confirmation of Candidature tests the merit and integrity of the research, on behalf of the various ethics committees. Therefore, Confirmation of Candidature must be successfully completed before any ethics applications can be lodged.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF CANDIDATE**

You must submit the final, paginated manuscript to your principal supervisor for review and approval by an advisory committee at least a week prior to the Confirmation so that the committee has an opportunity to review and digest it. Not giving your advisory panel sufficient time to consider the material may affect the quality of their understanding of your project and capacity to undertake the research.

**PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR’S RESPONSIBILITIES**

The principal supervisor is responsible for:

- Establishing an advisory committee (with up to 5 members) comprising:
  - School or Institute HDR Director, or nominee (Chair)
  - Principal supervisor and committee members
  - 1 or 2 other persons with relevant expertise either from within the School or Institute or from elsewhere
- Arranging for each committee member to receive a copy of the final confirmation document at least seven days before the meeting.
- Arranging a meeting room and formally advising the candidate and all members of the committee in writing of the meeting date and time. The meeting should not be held in a staff office.
- Administrative follow-up after the meeting which will include ensuring that the candidate and the School or Institute HDR Director are given copies of the report. The committee should agree on the main points to be included in the report on the candidate's confirmation.
- The advisory committee chair has responsibility for the committee report on the Confirmation of Candidature document and presentation; however, the principal supervisor should collate the main points discussed at the meeting and prepare a draft report for consideration by all members of the advisory committee and final written endorsement by the chair.

The committee is responsible for ensuring that the candidate has mastered the relevant literature, that the major research questions have been sharply defined, and that the research strategy is sound. The confirmation presentation offers an opportunity to crystallise ideas and to receive feedback from several experienced researchers at an early stage of the work.

**CONTACT US**

For more information about the Confirmation of Candidature, please contact the Graduate Research School.