WESTERN SYDNEY
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Graduate Research School

Guidelines to Writing the Confirmation of Candidature

HANDBOOK 2019

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) is an important early milestone during your PhD journey, and is a formal requirement you will need to successfully complete.

The 'CoC' – as it is affectionately known – is a formal and comprehensive process that reviews the progress you have made and details a plan of the proposed research to be undertaken from the start of your candidature to completion.

In overviewing the PhD program, we know that a successful CoC sets the foundation for a strong PhD: ensuring you are on top of the key literature, have a clear understanding of your research questions, and a plan to submission.

These guidelines will provide you with key information to assist you in preparing for your CoC.

While we outline a clear structure for your CoC document, please also consult with your supervisory panel to further guide you toward any additional discipline requirements that may need to be addressed.

In addition to your written CoC document, you are also required to make a presentation of your work. The CoC presentation provides a supportive environment in which you will discuss your work with your colleagues. The review panel will include your supervisors, the Higher Degree Research (HDR) Director from your School or Institute, and an independent specialist.

You can also invite other candidates to attend – they can assist by taking notes and make the presentation feel less intimidating.

The discussion following the presentation will also help to identify improvements that can be made, ensure that adequate resources and facilities are in place, the timeline is realistic and provide an opportunity to give positive feedback on your progress.

All Western Sydney University doctoral candidates must successfully complete their CoC. For full-time candidates the CoC must be completed within three to twelve months of commencing your candidature, and for part-time candidates it must be completed within 12 months of starting your candidature.

Best wishes!
Professor Caroline Smith
Dean (Graduate Studies)

Professor James Arvanitakis
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Graduate Studies)

THE GUIDELINES

In writing your Confirmation of Candidature Document, you can use your individual initiative, however, your document should have certain features.

It should be no less than 2,000 and no more than 10,000 words in length. Most are around 3,000 to 7,000 words long.

Structurally, it should have a title and the nine sections below, included in the document in this order.

1. Project Summary
2. Research Background
3. Research Approach
4. Significance of the Research
5. Timeline
6. Thesis Outline
7. Additional Resources and Training
8. Budget
9. References

The required features of each section are described in these guidelines.

Please note that your academic discipline might also stipulate that your document contains information or features additional to (or less than) what is indicated here. Ensure you check with your supervisors and HDR Director for information about further requirements in your discipline.

If you believe your proposal would best serve its purpose by being organised in a different way to that indicated in these guidelines, this should be discussed with and approved by your principal supervisor.

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

Summarise the main parts of your proposal (Research Background, Research Approach, Significance of the Research), in 500 to 1,500 words. Even though this section is at the beginning, our advice is for you to complete this section after you have written the rest of the document.

Briefly explain, in the following sequence:

→ The background to the aim(s) of your research.
→ The approach your research activities will use to address your aims and objectives.
→ The likely significance of the research.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

With reference to the academic literature and any other reliable sources, identify one or more gaps in some field, academic, or otherwise of scholarly interest. Specify one or more aims, clarifying how your research will either:

→ answer a question,
→ solve a problem,
→ test a hypothesis, or
→ achieve a practical or creative goal.

3. RESEARCH APPROACH

Demonstrate how your research activities will help you achieve your aims. Describe the specific objectives of your research activities. Convince the reader, using as much detail as is typical in your field, that it is feasible for you to reliably achieve your objectives in the expected timeframe. Most disciplines require an extensive discussion of the project's methodology, in its own section. In some disciplines, however, references to methodology are either not appropriate, or are raised while discussing the project in an essay-like structure.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the contribution that you expect your research to make to the field. Explain how it will:

→ Reduce any gap, and achieve the aims, identified in your Research Background section.

→ Provide information, insights, potential applications or direct material outcomes of use to:

  → Your own research community,

  → Any broader contexts you might have identified in your Research Background section (optional).

5. THESIS OUTLINE

Describe the likely structure of your thesis, using text or a combination of text and diagrams. Describe each chapter, noting its expected content and role, being as precise as you can be at this point.

6. TIMELINE

Provide your best estimates of when you will start and finish the various research activities of your project, including the writing up of thesis chapters, and thesis submission. If your project is complex, a diagrammatic workplan (flow chart, Gantt chart) might help your readers understand the timing, and inter-relationship, of the various elements.

7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING

If any equipment, software, database access, or access to expert guidance (not already available at Western Sydney University) is required to complete the project, explain how you will gain access (and be prepared to outline the costs in the next section). Likewise, if the project's success requires that you receive specialised training, explain how that will occur.

8. BUDGET

Use a table to list all of the costs associated with your research. For each item, also list the source of funding that will cover its cost.

9. REFERENCES

Provide a full list of the sources you have cited in the proposal, using a citation style appropriate to your discipline area.

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS OF A CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE DOCUMENT

Other items included in some Confirmation of Candidature Documents, within or outside of the main sections, are:

→ Table of Contents

→ List of Abbreviations

→ List of Tables

→ Preliminary work

→ Footnotes

→ Endnotes

→ Appendices

For projects that include a creative component, you may want to include samples of your creative work.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE PROJECT SUMMARY

Summarise the main parts of your proposal (Research Background, Research Approach, Significance of the Research), in 500 to 1,500 words. Complete this section after you have written the rest of the document. Briefly explain, in the following sequence:

→ The background to the aim(s) of your research.

→ The approach your research activities will use to address your aims and objectives.

→ The likely significance of the research.

The overall purpose of the section

This section is basically an abstract, or synopsis, of the main three parts of the proposal.

Given that it repeats information provided elsewhere in the proposal, you might wonder: What is its point? A summary, a feature of most proposals, serves two purposes. First, it acts like a simple road-map for the reader, making them aware of significant 'landmarks' they will encounter as they navigate the document. These landmarks of emphasis can help the reader to orient themselves in those parts of the proposal that are not as clear as they might otherwise be. Second, for you as the writer, creating a summary often helps you identify points of structural weakness in the longer version. If you find that your proposal is difficult to compress, this suggests that you have not yet properly clarified how the different sections of the document combine to present a unified argument.

This section should only be completed after you have written the Research Background, Research Approach and Significance of the Research sections.

What is the argument made by your Confirmation of Candidature Document?

While your CoC is written as a series of sections, the document overall defends a single proposition: The proposed project will result in a contribution to the field, of an appropriate scope and quality to be awarded the relevant degree.

The sections of the CoC are described briefly here to emphasise their inter-relationship.

Research Background

In the Research Background section, you argue that, given the current state of progress in some field, academic or otherwise, the opportunity for a contribution exists. Most commonly, you do this by indicating one or more gaps, *e.g. in knowledge or achievement. Your* aims are to acquire new knowledge or achieve something new, so that one or more gaps are filled or reduced. This is done by addressing one or more associated research questions, problems, hypotheses or goals.

Research Approach

In the Research Approach section, you argue that the aim/s introduced in the Research Background section can be achieved by fulfilling one or more objectives. An objective is just like an aim, and can be fulfilled in a variety of ways (answering a question, solving a problem or achieving a goal). In each case, the objective concerns a more specific and directly achievable outcome than an aim. For example:

Gap: It is not known whether the Australian public will accept the use of self-driving cars on public roads.

Aim: To understand the attitudes of the Australian public towards the introduction of self-driving cars on public roads.

Objective: To determine the attitudes of a representative sample of 300 Australians towards the introduction of self-driving cars on public roads.

The level of methodological detail required in a proposal varies greatly across the disciplines. This will affect the extent to which you discuss methodology in your summary.

Significance of the Research

In the Significance of the Research section, you:

1. Consider the possible outcomes of the objectives described in the Research Approach section;

2. Suggest how those outcomes might help you address any aims noted in the Research Background section; and

3. Speculate about the broader implications of those higher-level outcomes for:

   a. the existing state of progress in your field; and

   b. possibly, the world more generally.

You can now highlight and clarify the nature of the contribution, as an implied opportunity, in the Research Background section. Look carefully through the advice about the Research Outcomes to better understand which aspects of the project's outcomes should be included in your summary.

More succinctly, the core of your argument can be expressed in a single sentence as follows:

Given that the opportunity for a significant contribution exists in some field (Research Background), and that feasible ways to make that contribution also exist (Research Approach), this project has the potential to make that significant contribution (Significance of the Research).

ADVICE ON WRITING THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND

With reference to the academic literature and any other reliable sources, identify one or more gaps in some field, academic, or otherwise of scholarly interest. Specify one or more aims, clarifying how your research will either:

→ answer a question,

→ solve a problem,

→ test a hypothesis, or

→ achieve a practical or creative goal.

The overall purpose of the section

As noted in the Project Summary section, your goal in this section of the CoC is to persuade your readers that, given the current state of progress in some field of scholarly interest, the opportunity for a contribution exists. Instead of directly arguing about any such opportunity, however, the most common strategy is to begin by identifying a 'gap'. A gap refers to some way in which the field is incomplete. For example, you might identify something we don't know or understand (often referred to as a gap in knowledge) or some product or process that is undeveloped. Having established that a gap exists, you are then ready to reveal the starting point of your journey to address it: your aim, or aims.

Although the gap is the explicit focus of this section, the fact that you are arguing for its existence is commonly not clarified until near the end. Many CoC writers find it challenging to write in this discursive, 'Literature Review', style.

But there are good reasons for delaying the key point or 'punchline' of this section. It gives you time to provide context, allowing your readers to understand and become excited about what is often a rather specialised idea. Also, writing discursively gives you more freedom to discuss ideas in a richer way than if you were relentlessly promoting a single idea. Finally, it helps you to better understand your own topic area. By being forced to frame the gap within a context of what has already been achieved, you will almost inevitably be exposed to novel ideas.

The structure of the Research Background section

The aims: Across all disciplines, the background section should end in a similar way, by noting or recapitulating any gaps, and then announcing the associated aims. Aims can be of four different types.

A goal: The simplest case involves a project where the contribution to the field will be a new or improved product or process. Here, you will end by stating what we have been referring to as a goal. For example, your goal might be to create a prototype of a device that performs a certain function, or, perhaps, a new type of cultural product, e.g. a radically different novel.

A hypothesis or question: When the contribution will be new knowledge, then the research background typically ends with one or more hypotheses or questions. Hypotheses are more common when the topic is well-understood. Any hypothesis will involve a prediction that is explicitly testable. For example, if there were already strong reasons to believe that the blue colour of flowers of species X is responsible for attracting bees, then the researcher could state this hypothesis: Mutant flowers of species X that are white should attract fewer bees than naturally blue flowers. In contrast, if little is known about what attracts bees to species X, and there were, for example, eight possible factors, you would be more likely to conclude your background section with a question: Which attributes of species X are responsible for attracting bees? The less well-understood an area is, the more general the question tends to be.

A problem: Stylistically, a general question can also be phrased as a problem *or* issue: As yet, it is not known which attributes of species X are responsible for attracting bees. In mathematics*, the word* problem is also used in a more precise sense, to refer to long-established challenges, such as Hilbert's problems. In some areas of sociology, the aim of a project is to help solve a social problem directly. In participatory or action research (Stringer, 2013), the researcher aims to bring about change during the course of the project, rather than it only occurring subsequently as a by-product of new knowledge.

Leading up to your Aims: (i) The Research Funnel

Perhaps the single most common structural pattern of a Research Background section is where the scope of the discussion steadily narrows as it proceeds. This is often referred to as the 'research funnel'. Like an actual funnel, the content is broad in its focus at the top (i.e. it starts by providing a context for the project) then narrows down to your research area, and your aims. The usefulness of this pattern across the disciplines is also supported by how commonly it is used in research article Introductions (Swales & Feak, 2004).

If you use the research funnel approach in your CoC, you will narrow its focus much more gradually than would typically be the case in a published paper. In the latter case, narrowing the scope might occur several times within a single paragraph. The Research Background section of a proposal is typically many times longer than the Introduction of a paper; thus, narrowing the scope will probably largely occur, not within paragraphs, but at the start of a paragraph or sub-section.

The greater length, and the less explicitly argumentative style you use in this section, allow you to discuss ideas and theory in a more in-depth manner. This is particularly important for researchers in the humanities, the social sciences and law. In these discipline areas, considerations of theory, philosophy and epistemology are typically more substantial than in the natural sciences, for example. Consequently, the researcher has an opportunity to create a positive impression by demonstrating the ability to skillfully discuss such matters.

Leading up to your Aims: (ii) Other organising principles

The Research Background section can be organised according to many other principles, and these allow you to write even more discursively. The various possibilities (such as chronology; increasing relevance; theory to practise; compare and contrast) are covered in many thesis writing guides, as part of how to write a literature review (e.g. Carter, Kelly, & Brailsford, 2012). Indeed, in many CoCs, the Research Background section has been simply titled, Literature Review.

A highly discursive style does have one drawback. Unless you are a gifted storyteller, the discursive style tends to provide more opportunities for the reader to miss or forget any gaps you raise in your discussions. Also, if you have revealed more than one gap, the reader might be confused as to which are of direct importance to the project. Whenever there are such risks, it is important you recapitulate the relevant gaps in a concluding paragraph to the sub-section.

In other cases, this concluding sub-section is much longer, because other types of information are needed to help the reader 'connect the dots' between your gaps and the associated aims. Such sub-sections are also common in the Introductions of theses in the social sciences and are often titled Scope.

Background sections with an atypical purpose

While a thorough analysis of the existing literature is the most common way to identify a gap, it is not the only way. In an approach sometimes used in the social sciences, problematising, researchers look outside the standard literature of their field for inspiration (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). In research areas that are very historically contingent (e.g. management, education), it is more likely that a highly influential theory might depend, perhaps entirely, on an unacknowledged assumption that is no longer true. In such cases, a researcher might consider the standard literature of little use, and focus instead on insights from alternative sources.

For somewhat similar reasons, those social scientists who use a grounded theory approach typically hold off from framing their study within any existing theoretical framework. The theory with the greatest explanatory power is expected to emerge only once data has been collected. Exposure to plausibly relevant literature might also be consciously avoided prior to data collection. In this case, the approach is not taken because the literature itself is considered incorrect, but because it might cause the researcher to be biased when collecting and analysing data (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Tools and Resources

→ References for writing the Research Background section are provided at the end of this document.

→ The Research Blueprint, a way of conceptualising the hierarchical logic of a research project.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Demonstrate how your research activities will help you achieve your aims. Describe the specific objectives of your research activities. Convince the reader, using as much detail as is typical in your field, that it is feasible for you to reliably achieve your objectives. Most disciplines require an extensive discussion of the project's methodology, in its own section. In some disciplines, however, references to methodology are either not appropriate, or are raised while discussing the project in an essay-like structure.

Do I need to discuss my research approach in a separate section?

The answer to this question is yes for the majority of candidates. In most cases, the section will be as important as the Research Background. Nevertheless, there are cases where the proposal author does not directly address their Methodology at all in such a focused way. The most clear-cut example is pure mathematics, a field in which insights are often gained in such highly personal ways that they cannot be usefully described. In such a case, it would not be necessary to include a Research Approach section. You should still refer to your objectives, which you could do directly after stating your aims. In pure mathematics, the most typical form of an objective is the proof of a sub-theorem. Just as with any other objective, this acts as a stepping stone towards something larger, for example, the proof of a theorem.

In some projects in law and the humanities (and especially in philosophy), one of the main, or sole, methodological strategies is reflection. In most cases where this strategy is used, the author is also unlikely to dedicate an entire section to explaining how they will manage the reflective process. The author might still need to discuss approach-related matters, such as the choice of a theoretical or aesthetic perspective, or the nature of the arguments that are likely to be developed. These points might be raised at appropriate points throughout an essay-like structure combines the content of the Research Background and Research Approach sections. Regardless of whether you have a separate Research Approach section, you must make the readers aware of the practical steps you will take to achieve your aims. You need to clarify your objectives, because it is by fulfilling them that you move closer to achieving your aims.

Another discipline area where reflection is an important tool is practice-based (creative) research, e.g. where the research activity might involve writing a novel or composing a piece of music. In such cases, the finished thesis typically contains extensive documentation of the author's reflective processes (Krauth & Brophy, 2011); how that will be managed should be fully explained in the proposal.

Overall Purpose of the Section

Once your aims have been defined, you have to persuade the reader that they can be achieved. This section tells them how you go about doing that. In terms of writing skill, this section is typically not as challenging as the preceding section of your Confirmation of Candidature Document (CoC). The methodological options in most projects comprise a series of hierarchically nested choices and activities; this hierarchy can serve as a straightforward structural framework for the entire section. In terms of the content, however, many CoC writers greatly underestimate the thoroughness of the descriptions typically required in their discipline; likewise, the significance of justifying their choices; and, for some projects, the ethical considerations that should be addressed.

The hierarchical structure of the section

Depending on your discipline, and the particular nature of your project, some or all of the following hierarchy of elements might form the broad sub-sections of your Research Approach section (adapted from: Creswell & Creswell, 2017):

→ Worldview (Theoretical, or epistemological stance)
  → Research Design
    → Research Methods
      → Data collection
        → Data Analysis
          → Data Interpretation

How much of this hierarchy you use, if any, will depend on the discipline area. In the qualitative social sciences, it is often recommended to discuss all of the above elements in the Research Approach section (e.g. Creswell & Creswell, 2017). One exception would be if you had already found it appropriate to discuss your theoretical stance earlier in the proposal. In the quantitative social sciences, and other empirical or technical sciences (e.g. biology, physics, chemistry, linguistics, engineering, applied mathematics, computer science) researchers typically begin with the Research Methods or Research Design. In all the disciplines mentioned so far, the Research Methods sub-section is itself likely to consist of many sub-sections, also potentially organised in a nested fashion.

Thoroughness, justification and ethics

For projects in the sciences and social sciences especially, CoC writers typically underestimate the level of scrutiny supervisors will bring to the Research Approach section. Before committing to your confirmation, your review panel needs to feel confident that the project is worth the University's time, effort and funds, and the support of Western Sydney University and the broader community. Proposals are often considered weak in three areas: the thoroughness of the descriptions; the justification of the particular choices made; and, if applicable, the consideration of any ethical issues.

For all three areas, it is possible that proposal writers have looked for guidance to the Methodology sections of theses and publications in their area. While such sources will be useful in many ways, authors of completed projects typically do not describe or explain their approaches as exhaustively as they would when writing a proposal. A completed project has already been funded, has been proven more or less feasible, and has apparently occurred without causing conspicuous harm. In judging whether your project will likely prove feasible and safe, your supervisors are largely depending on your written proposal. The Research Approach section should give them reason to believe you are someone who will, on a daily basis, over a period of years, make sensible, rigorously-researched decisions.

Some candidates, once confirmed, will proceed to submit a separate Ethics Approval application. This does not, however, excuse them from having to address ethical considerations in the CoC. As mentioned already, persuading your supervisors that the project can be conducted without causing harm is fundamental to demonstrating its feasibility. At the CoC stage, candidates should demonstrate that in choosing the project's design features, they have considered how those choices will influence the possibility of harm to themselves, any participants, animals, and the wider community. All engagements with people, especially, should be assumed as potentially detrimental, and every effort must be made to foresee and mitigate possible problems. In the social sciences, particularly, there is considerable literature devoted to such matters (e.g. Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Proposal writers should:

1. Demonstrate their knowledge of the literature relevant to the ethical concerns typical of their field; and

2. Show how it informs their choice of the project's design and implementation.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH SECTION

Describe the contribution that you expect your research to make to the field. Explain how it will:

→ Reduce any gap, and achieve the aims, identified in your Research Background section.

→ Provide information, insights, potential applications or direct material outcomes of use to:

  → Your own research community.

  → Any broader contexts you might have identified in your Research Background section (optional).

The overall purpose of the section
Given that you have now convinced your readers that the opportunity for a significant contribution exists in your field (Research Background), and that feasible ways to make that contribution exist (Research Approach), you can now discuss what that contribution will be. Because this section is the most speculative part of your proposal, in theory, it has the least potential for persuasive impact. In practice, it may well punch above its apparent argumentative weight because:

i. You can, and are expected, to write in a more direct style than in the preceding sections; and

ii. Your readers may well be at their most alert.

This section has the greatest potential for generating excitement.

In the suggestions below, you might feel that you are being asked to speculate too much, too early. And some practitioners, e.g. those who use a grounded theory approach, would probably argue that it is presumptuous, or ill-advised, to think too far ahead in this way. For better or worse, however, major funding bodies always require applicants to speculate in their proposals, with a lot of emphasis on 'national impact'. Thinking about hypothetical outcomes is a useful skill to develop and speculating in the Research Outcomes section can lead you to valuable refinements in the earlier parts of your proposal, particularly in studies that are already well defined at this stage.

A two- or three-part structure
The section can be relatively simple, with either two or three short sub-sections. If your project is already well-defined, i.e. your research questions are specific, or the project is goal- or hypothesis-driven, then the section will work well with three sub-sections. In a less-defined project, i.e. where the Research Background section concludes with questions (or problems) of a general nature, then you will probably restrict yourself to two sub-sections. In either case, always briefly recapitulate the research questions, problems, hypotheses or goals at the start of the section.

In the case of a three-part section, you can now proceed to speculate about the results you could potentially obtain. Results represent answers to questions that are more specific than your research questions. For example, if your research question was "Do people driving alone have accidents less frequently than people driving in company?", a corresponding results-level question might be "In NSW, between 2009-2018, what proportion of accidents involved people driving alone?". Speculate about the trends you might see in the data you collect. For some data-driven studies, e.g. in proposals for a clinical trial of a new anti-cancer treatment, authors might even provide examples of the graphs or tables they expect to include in the published paper. In general, this approach can help make the work seem more concrete to your readers. It can also make you think more carefully about what data you will be collecting, and how. You might find yourself returning to the Research Approach section, to fine tune your methods.

Next, in both the two- and three-part approaches, you directly address your original research questions, hypotheses or goals. In the fictional car-driver-behaviour study mentioned above, the possible answers to the research question (sometimes referred to as findings) might be "Yes", No" or "Unclear". Do not, however, restrict yourself to such simple considerations. For example, you might have derived the research question from some broad model that describes how car drivers behave. You should now be in a position to reflect upon the consequences of your findings for the validity of the model.

At this point, you are also in a good position to discuss how your contribution might be directly used, either within your research community, or some wider community. At the very least, your thesis itself, and any associated publications (books, journal articles) have the potential to influence thinking and practice in your own research community. Discuss how many publications you expect to write and what their topics might be. With respect to the wider community, your research might occur in an area where new insights are often translated into some practical application. For example, the writer of the car-driver proposal might note how the work could potentially lead to public advertisements focused on the risks of driving with multiple passengers.

The final sub-section is optional. Here you might consider the implications of your findings for at least one of the broad contexts that might have been introduced in the Research Background section. This also presents a good opportunity to consider which broad context your findings are most likely to affect. For example, if implications exist for two broad contexts, but are much stronger for one of them, then that might be the one to emphasise near the start of the proposal, in your Research Background section. Indeed, if you use a 'research funnel' structure for that section, the more strongly supported broad context might be the one to launch it. For the car-driver project, for example, the proposal writer might begin the Research Background section with a discussion of national efforts to reduce the frequency of car accidents.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE THESIS OUTLINE

Describe the likely structure of your thesis, using text or a combination of text and diagrams. Describe each chapter, noting its expected content and role, being as precise as you can be at this point.

Advice on writing the Thesis Outline section
This section, like the Timeline section, will help you think about your project in more practical terms. While your research project is a grand intellectual adventure, it must also result in a written record of that journey: the thesis, or dissertation. This is a daunting task for most people. By thinking about the likely content of each chapter, and the flow of ideas across the chapters, you will find that the task feels more achievable.

It is also an opportunity to consider the basic structure of your thesis. Disciplines vary greatly in how the content is grouped. For example, in the natural sciences each major block of results will often have its own chapter, including an introduction, methods and discussion. In the social sciences, however, all the results (even if they might, at some later point, be published in a number of separate papers) are typically bundled together into a single Results chapter. You can ask your supervisor, or look to published theses for guidance. Western Sydney University provides published theses online at:
https://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/

ADVICE ON WRITING THE TIMELINE SECTION

Provide your best estimates of when you will start and finish the various research activities of your project, including the writing up of thesis chapters, and thesis submission. If your project is complex, a diagrammatic work plan (flow chart, Gantt chart) might help your readers understand the timing, and inter-relationship, of the various elements.

Advice on writing the Timeline section

Two considerations drive the inclusion of this section. The first is that research projects are typically highly constrained by time. You need to think carefully about how you organise your activities so that you can complete your project in the time available. Setting a series of milestones, i.e. goals that have dates attached, provides you with a handy checklist that you can refer back to and use to see if you are still on track.

The second consideration is that some projects are logistically complex and potentially unpredictable. In these cases, a work plan might be a better model for this section. In a work plan, there is a greater emphasis on the inter-relationship of the parts of the project. For example, the direction taken in one part of the project might depend on the outcome of an earlier part. In this case, a flow chart might help the reader appreciate the influence of the earlier outcome.

Providing a well-thought-out timeline or work plan helps to persuade your review panel that your project is feasible. Even though time is less emphasised in a work plan (compared to a classical timeline), some key milestones should always be included. The most important dates are those for the completion of specified thesis chapters and thesis submission.

This also gives you a baseline to monitor your progress against and is something you should revisit on a regular basis. You can use it to identify delays and reassess your goals.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING SECTION

Provide a detailed description of any equipment, software, databases, facilities, services, specialised training or expert guidance (not already available at Western Sydney University) required to complete the project. You should also explain how you will gain access to these services, training and facilities.

Advice on writing the Additional Resources and Training section
We suggest that you consult with your supervisory panel for advice on how to write this section.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE BUDGET SECTION

Provide a table to list all of the costs associated with your research. For each item, also list the source of funding that will cover its cost.

Advice on writing the Budget section

We suggest that you consult with your supervisory panel for advice on writing this section. You need to identify any significant budgetary needs early to determine what can be realistically supported by your School or Institute. Your HDR Director can also provide advice.

ADVICE ON WRITING THE REFERENCES SECTION

Provide a full list of the sources you have cited in the proposal, using a citation style appropriate to your discipline area.

Advice on writing the References section

Now is a great time to start building up your proficiency in literature management. Even at this early stage you will probably be reading hundreds of articles, and exposing yourself to vast amounts of information. If this is your first major research project, you might not have a good understanding of how much work is involved in keeping track of everything you read. Being able to cite it properly, in the ways acceptable in your discipline, is another huge task. Luckily there are wonderful resources you can draw upon to help you. Western Sydney University provides you with free access to bibliographic software, and the Library provides regular workshops on using this type of software and on general citation practices:
https://library.westernsydney.edu.au/main/guides/referencing-citation

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE REVISION OF THE CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE DOCUMENT GUIDELINES

This list includes all those cited in the Advice sections, plus some additional resources.

Alessandrini, M. (2012). *Non-positivist Approaches to Research in the Third Sector: Empowered policy-making.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISTR 10th International Conference, Universita Degli Studi Di Siena, Siena, Italy.

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