

## Early Candidature Plan

### Research Higher Degrees

The Early Candidature Plan is constructed at the commencement of candidature. It establishes goals and provides a framework for assessing progress in the early stages of candidature. The timing means it may be revised as you progress. You should also identify skills that you may need to gain or update in preparation of those plans.

Early Candidature Plans are unique to each candidature, depending on the topic and the background and training of the candidate. For example, one candidate may need to master a new laboratory technique; another may need to explore library training and on-line search facilities.

The Early Candidature Plan must be discussed and agreed upon by you and your supervisors(s).

"Both my supervisors and I knew what I would do and complete within the first year... I did more than we had listed"

The Early Candidature Plan is flexible and can be expected to be revised as candidature progresses. It may be used as a framework for further goal setting; to be reviewed when writing the annual progress report in second year or when you and your supervisor(s) think would be best.

"In the early days the goals changed, as new challenges and directions emerge..."

"Meeting these goals within a specified time frame built my confidence through a sense of achievement".

The Early Candidature Plan is different from, and separate to, the Confirmation of Candidature and the two should not be confused.

#### **How to get the most benefit from the Early Candidature Plan;**

- Think in terms of additional skills/knowledge you will need for this project
- Develop a time frame for your project, in particular, for the first year
- Talk about how progress will be evaluated in the first year
- Include timing of other hallmarks of progress such as doing the literature review, confirmation of candidature, ethics or biosafety approval.
- Discuss resourcing needs with your supervisor and get advice on how to access funds to support you candidature from the School/ Research Centre
- Check for suitable workshops and on-line resources
- Map your expected progress, perhaps with a GANTT chart. See Module 2 of Postgraduate Essentials, "Getting Organised"

## Common errors with Early Candidature Plan that diminish its usefulness

- Incorrect timing of the process
- Supervisor and candidate not being in agreement about purpose or usefulness of the planning process.
- Goals being set that are unrealistic or inadequate
- Confusing the plan with Confirmation of Candidature

## How the Early Candidature Plan differs from Confirmation of Candidature

The Early Candidature Plan is an early overview that sets out overall goals and plans in the first year. The Early Candidature plan may include a time frame for the Confirmation of Candidature.

The Confirmation of Candidature is a formal and comprehensive process that reviews the progress and plan of the candidature from commencement to completion. 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. Confirmation of Candidature requires a written document, verbal presentation to a panel and formal feedback on the presentations and document.

The Confirmation of Candidature may be completed as early as three months. Usually it is done within six months for full-time candidates but it can take up to a maximum of 18 months for part-time doctoral candidates.

For further information see

[http://www.uws.edu.au/research/current\\_research\\_students/confirmation\\_of\\_candidature](http://www.uws.edu.au/research/current_research_students/confirmation_of_candidature)

## How to Complete Your Early Candidature Plan

Access the form in Postgraduate Essentials

Meet your supervisor(s) to discuss your plans

Complete the plan

Make a copy for you and your supervisor(s)

Send to Sandra Lawrence in the Office of Research Services,

[sg.lawrence@uws.edu.au](mailto:sg.lawrence@uws.edu.au) Building K Kingswood Campus Locked Bag 1797 Penrith South DC NSW 1797

## Completion Date

You have some scope about the time in which to complete the Early Candidature Plan. You and your supervisor(s) will know when is best. The range of time starts directly at commencement and extends up to six months from first enrolment. If you plan to conduct the Confirmation of Candidature within the first six months, the Early Candidature Plan should be completed well ahead of that time. Timing will be also influenced by whether you are full-time or part-time and whether you need to seek ethics approval (which will affect the date of the Confirmation of Candidature). However, please note that the maximum advisable time for your Early Candidature Plan is six months.