

## **OFFICE FOR RESEARCHER TRAINING, QUALITY AND INTEGRITY MID-CANDIDATURE REVIEW GUIDELINES**

### **Statement of Purpose**

Congratulations, you are half way through your Doctor of Philosophy degree!

After Candidature, the Mid-Candidature Review is the second milestone you will meet in your Higher Degree by Research (HDR). The primary purpose of the presentation is for candidates to demonstrate to the University that they are undertaking high quality research and are doing so in a timely manner. This milestone is an opportunity for you to present your progress to date and receive valuable feedback from a Panel of experts in the research community. Your presentation will be conducted in a supportive and engaging environment, thus enabling you to further enhance your communication and presentation skills within an academic context. The feedback you receive is designed to facilitate you to keep on track to a high quality and timely completion, that your research skills are developing appropriately and that you are working well with your supervisors. After your Mid-Candidature Review, the next Review is Towards Submission.

### **A. Deadlines and Progression:**

Doctor of Philosophy:                      Within 24 months (EFT) of initial enrolment and after successful completion of Confirmation of Candidature (within 6-9 months (EFT))

Candidates must present for their Mid-Candidature Review as per the scheduled time communicated to them at the time of their Confirmation of Candidature and/or by ORTQI. Factors such as enrolment mode (FT/PT/Intermission) are taken into account when scheduling your calendar of Reviews. Failure to participate in the Mid-Candidature Review may result in the Research Institute recommending that Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings commence.

### **B. Mid-Candidature Review Components**

The Mid-Candidature Review will take a number of factors into consideration, including:

- Has the candidate's progress since Confirmation remained satisfactory in relation to feasibility and viability of the proposed project and in accordance with the requirements of the degree in which they are enrolled?
- Where relevant, are Ethics, Intellectual Property (IP) and OHS measures in place?
- Are the candidate's research skills developing appropriately via the successful completion of coursework units (where applicable), workshop attendance and training programs as per their program requirements and the demands of their particular project and goals? Reference should be made to the most recent VU MyPlan to identify strategic planning for priority skills/learning areas.
- Is the candidate on track to complete their research project by their submission date?
- Can the continuation of adequate supervision, resources and infrastructure within the Research Institute I be ensured in order to enable completion within the required timeframe?

- Has there has been a significant change in research direction since Confirmation of Candidature?  
Significant changes may include:
  - a. a major change to the project plan
  - b. a major change in resourcing and/or support including a change in academic supervision for the new research direction.

If yes, the candidate is required to submit a new application for Confirmation of Candidature with the relevant Confirmation of Candidature documentation. It is not anticipated that at Mid-candidature, many candidates would be in this situation.

### **C. Requirements for Mid-Candidature Review**

#### **i. Oral Presentation**

Candidates are required to prepare for a 20-minute oral presentation for the Review Panel and University community. The oral presentation must explore at least one aspect of the research undertaken to date; this should be clearly situated within the overall context of the project and note anticipated future directions of the research program. It is expected that the candidate will use power point slides (a maximum of 10) to support their presentation. Candidates who have presented at an external conference may wish to consider using that as the basis of their presentation, or vice versa, use this Milestone as an opportunity to prepare for their presentation at the external conference.

#### **ii Written Submission for Mid-candidature Review**

1. Candidates are required to submit a comprehensive Table of Contents, a Draft Abstract (no more than three pages) and a paragraph that summarises each of the chapters. It is anticipated that candidates use the Table of Contents facility in Word to generate their Table of Contents.
2. One complete chapter to demonstrate progress in the research and the production of a thesis since Confirmation of Candidature, such as a Methods/Methodology or the Data Analysis/Results/Findings chapter. Candidates may wish to submit a manuscript, either under review or published, however, the Panel will be looking for evidence of the production of the candidate's thesis commensurate with the stage of their candidature.  
Required total word length approximately 10,000 words.
3. Candidates may wish to provide a statement (no more than two pages) that specifically responds to the questions posed in Section B.

The Panel will recognise that the information is presented at Mid-Candidature but will be looking for evidence of satisfactory progress and/or to identify areas for improvement. It is important that candidates be prepared to respond to the questions set out in Section B in their documentation/presentation, or they prepare themselves to answer any of these questions in their meeting with the Panel.

Written material must be typed on A4 paper single sided using 11 or 12 font in Times New Roman or Arial, with a minimum 1.5 line spacing. The left and right margins must be a minimum of 3cm and pages must be numbered. All diagrams, tables etc. must contain a number and caption and be referred to in the text and placed as near as possible to relevant text.

#### **D. Constitution and Composition of Review Panel**

**Panel composition:** The Principal Supervisor will be responsible for organising the panel and submitting the Composition of Panel to [candidature@vu.edu.au](mailto:candidature@vu.edu.au) for approval by the Research Institute Deputy Director, or nominee.

Panel Composition\* is as follows:

- Chair – Research Institute Deputy Director or their nominee;
- A Program Leader or academic who has expertise relevant to the candidate’s research area, but has not been involved in the candidate’s supervision;
- An academic and active researcher with appropriate qualifications and relevant supervisory experience. This person may, but does not necessarily have to be, an expert in the specific field of research, provided they have broad knowledge and expertise in relation to research in the field. It is expected that this panel member should be external\*\* to the Field of Research (FoR) in which the candidate is enrolled.

\* Where possible, the Panel should be the same Panel convened for Confirmation of Candidature.

\*\* If an external panel member to the University is nominated, Research Institute are responsible for any associated expenses and these must be discussed and approved with the Research Institute Deputy Director prior to their formal nomination.

#### **E. Administrative Process around Milestone:**

**Advice on Scheduling.** Candidates and supervisors will be advised, by ORTQI, no less than three months in advance of when a candidate will be required to present for Mid-Candidature. i.e. No later than December for the March sessions, and no later than June for the September sessions.

**Designated Time for the Candidate’s Presentation.** All candidates are required to present at their scheduled date and time, which will be provided to them no later than six weeks before their scheduled date and time. Only in exceptional circumstances will candidates be able to request an alternative date or time. The request would normally need to be made no less than 20 days prior to the scheduled Mid-Candidature presentation. **Exceptional circumstances** will be considered on a case by case basis and include medical, personal or family circumstances (documentary evidence required).

**Candidate’s Written Submission.** Candidates must submit their completed ‘*Mid-Candidature Review Documentation*’, in one PDF document, no later than four weeks prior to the scheduled presentation date

**Formal Invitations.** Invitations will be circulated to the candidate, panel members, and the supervisors by ORTQI with the accompanying documentation. Supervisors may extend this invitation to appropriately qualified academics/practitioners to attend the presentation as audience members.

**University Promotion of the Presentations.** ORTQI will inform the University community of the presentations.

## **F. Responsibilities of the Chair, Panel Members and Supervisors**

The role of the Review Panel is to undertake a high quality and independent review of the two elements of the Mid-Candidature Review – the written submission and oral presentation.

### **Responsibilities of the Chair**

- The Chair is responsible for the appropriate conduct of the meeting. Tasks they should focus on include:
  - Confirming that members of the Panel have the appropriate documentation required for the presentation;
  - Assisting the candidate with the setting up of the equipment, lighting, audio etc;
  - Introducing members of the Panel to each other, as required, and to the candidate;
  - Providing a brief summary of the purpose of the presentation for the candidate and Panel members;
  - Providing an outline of the meeting's proceedings and the timing allowed for each stage of the meeting (see below);
  - Keeping the candidate, Panel members and the audience members to time;
  - Fielding, and confirming as required, questions from Panel members and the audience members, and responses from the candidate;
  - Ensuring all questions and responses are communicated in a clear and professional manner;
  - Preparing a Panel Report that is clear and concise to provide critical and constructive review of the academic rigour of the research to date;
  - Ensuring that the Panel Report and recommendation is forwarded to ORTQI at [candidature@vu.edu.au](mailto:candidature@vu.edu.au) within 10 working days of the presentation.

### **Responsibilities of the Panel Members**

- Reading the documentation in advance of the presentation;
- Posing questions to the candidate to assist them to clarify aspects of their research as need be;
- Providing constructive feedback to the candidate as appropriate;
- Providing notes, as required, to the Chair in a timely manner to enable them to finalise the Report for the candidate within 10 days of the presentation.

The Research Institute may designate a panel writer to assist the Chair in the preparation of the final Panel Report. In most cases this will be an internal panel member other than the Chair but the Research Institute have the discretion to make alternative arrangements.

### **Responsibilities of the Supervisor**

The candidate's Principal Supervisor must be available to attend the presentations, but are not members of the Panel. Supervisors are also required to take notes on their candidate's performance in the Review and include information that may assist the Panel to have a better understanding of the candidate's progress. It is advisable that the Supervisors and candidate meet before the presentation to agree on any additional information that might be conveyed to the Panel giving consideration to privacy and confidentiality.

## Outline of the Proceedings

Stage	Approximate Time
• Introductions	5 minutes
• Applicant's oral presentation	20 minutes
• Open discussion and questions (All)	10 minutes
• Thanks to applicant and audience member. Discussion [Panel members, candidate with supervisor(s)]	10 minutes
• Closed discussion (Panel members)	10 minutes
• Outcomes [Panel members, candidate with supervisor(s)]	10 minutes

*The candidate will be verbally advised of the panel's recommendations and provided with feedback and suggestions. Formal confirmation of the Panel's deliberations will follow after the meeting.*

## **G. Outcome of the Mid-Candidature Review and Communication to Candidate**

1. There will be only two outcomes of a Milestone.
  - a) Satisfactory. Candidates will continue to work with their supervisors to make progress towards their next Milestone. There will be no need to prepare a response to the Milestone Report.
  - b) Not satisfactory. Candidates will be able to respond to this outcome. The process is outlined below.

Candidates will receive their Milestone Reports within 10-15 working days after their presentation.

### **For candidates whose Milestone Outcome is deemed to be Not Satisfactory.**

No later than 10 working days weeks after receiving their Milestone Report, candidates must contact ORTQI (via [candidature@vu.edu.au](mailto:candidature@vu.edu.au)) to meet with the Deputy Director (or nominee) of their relevant Research Institute with their Principal Supervisor. At that meeting, they will negotiate a program of study for the next three months of enrolment (EFT) to assist them to address the issues raised through the Milestone Review. By the end of the three-month period, candidates must report (via [candidature@vu.edu.au](mailto:candidature@vu.edu.au)) on their achievements to the agreed program of study.

If the deliverables/hurdles set out in the agreed program of study are deemed by the Deputy Director (or nominee) to be achieved, the candidate can continue in their candidature and will then be working to achieve their next Milestone. Candidates will receive advice within 10 working days of the receipt of their report.

The Research Institute may invoke formal Unsatisfactory Proceedings for the candidate if

- the candidate does not make contact with ORTQI within 10 working days of receiving their Milestone Report; or
- their Report is not received by the end of the three months; or
- if their Report is received and not deemed to be satisfactory by the Deputy Director (or nominee).

**H. Scholarship holders**

Scholarship recipients are reminded that continuation of a scholarship is subject to satisfactory progress being made. Scholarship stipends will normally be suspended under either of the following conditions:

1. The candidate does not present for Mid-Candidature review under the timelines stipulated above; and/or
2. The Research Institute commences Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings.