

## OFFICE FOR RESEARCHER TRAINING, QUALITY & INTEGRITY TOWARDS SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

### Statement of Purpose

Congratulations, you are almost at the end of your research journey!

The Towards Submission Review is the final milestone you will meet in your Higher Degree by Research (HDR) enrolment. This milestone is an opportunity for you to present your research and discuss your progress to date, as well as your expected progress to your completion date, while receiving 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 continue to enhance your communication and presentation skills within an academic context. The feedback you receive is designed to ensure that you are on track to a timely and successful completion, that your research skills are developing appropriately and that the supervisory arrangements are appropriate.

### A. Deadlines and Progression:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Doctoral Candidates:    | Within 36 months EFT of initial enrolment and after successful completion of Mid-Candidature (usually 12 months EFT after the completion of Mid-Candidature (if applicable). (3.0 Consumed Load)  |
| Professional Doctorates | Within 30 months EFT of initial enrolment and after successful completion of Candidature (usually 12 months EFT after the completion of Candidature. (2.5 Consumed Load)                          |
| Masters (Research)      | Within 18 months EFT of initial enrolment and after successful completion of Mid-Candidature (usually 6-8 months EFT after the completion of Mid-Candidature (if applicable). (1.5 Consumed Load) |

**Candidates who wish to submit their thesis prior to their timely duration due date must request an early Towards Submission. It is a requirement to have Towards Submission confirmed prior to submitting your thesis for examination.**

**Candidates must present for their Towards Submission within the timeframes set below:**

|                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Master of Applied Research | 1.5 years (EFT)  |
| Master of Research         | 1.25 years (EFT) |
| Masters by Research        | 1.5 years (EFT)  |
| All Doctoral Degrees       | 3.0 years (EFT)  |

**Failure to do so may result in the commencement of Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings:**

**B. Towards Submission Components**

The Towards Submission will take the following into consideration:

- The quality of the research, including problem recognition, conceptualisation, research design, analytical and interpretive skills, and overall scholarly standard of the research.
- Has there been a significant change in research direction since Mid-Candidature confirmation (if applicable)? If yes, the candidate is required to submit a new research proposal to VU Research for consideration by the relevant Research Institute. Significant changes may include:
  - a. a major change in resourcing and/or support;
  - b. a change in academic supervision for the new research direction.
- Timeliness of progress.
- Development of transferable skills developing appropriately via 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.
- Provision of resources, supervision and facilities.
- Responding to the recommendations, if any, of the Mid-Candidature Review (if applicable).

**C. Requirements for Pre-Submission Review****i. Oral Presentation (20 mins):**

The candidate is required to make a 20 minute oral presentation to the Review Panel and University community.

There are two key parts to the presentation:

1. The research project. This part of the oral presentation should focus on one aspect of research undertaken to date; this should be clearly situated within the overall context of the whole project and note anticipated future directions of the research program.
2. Progress to date and plans for progress to timely completion.

It is expected that the candidate will use power point slides (a maximum of 10) to support their presentation. The presentation will be followed by time for questions from members of the audience (10 mins). Feedback from the Review Panel will be given in a closed session with the panel members only (10 mins). All Supervisors will be asked to leave the room for the final session to review overall progress to date (10 mins).

**ii. Written Submission:**

1. As this is the Towards-Submission milestone, it is expected that thesis submission will occur within six months (EFT). It is expected that candidates submit a draft of their thesis (or exegesis with publications or exegesis and creative work); a Table of Contents; References and Appendices.
2. A summary paper (no more than 5 pages), briefly outlining the plan of work required to complete the thesis and submit for examination.

**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 and Mid-Candidature review (if applicable).

\*\* If an external panel member to the University is nominated, a request for reimbursement of travel costs must be approved by the Research Institute Deputy Director prior to confirmation of the panel.

**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 Towards Submission 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 '*Towards Submission*' *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 Towards Submission– 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 Institutes 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**

| <b>Stage</b>  | <b>Approximate Time</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| • 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 Towards Submission 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.

**If applicable, the panel will also recommend whether an extension to candidature (doctoral) be granted.**

**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. If eligible, an Extension to Scholarship can be applied for as part of the Towards Submission Scholarship stipends will normally be suspended under either of the following conditions:

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