HDR CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE GUIDELINES

Master of Philosophy

Doctor of Ministry

Doctor of Philosophy

Purpose of Confirmation of Candidature

One of the first major milestones in the HDR journey for research candidates is confirmation of candidature. HDR students are considered probationary until confirmation of candidature has been successfully completed.

Confirmation of candidature occurs for PhD students within 6-12 months for full-time equivalent (FTE) and 12-18 months part-time equivalent (PTE). For Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Ministry (DMin), this process takes place within 6 months of completion of coursework.

Students will prepare (in consultation with their supervision team) a proposal of the research to be undertaken for the remainder of their candidature. The proposal is presented to a confirmation of candidature panel for review.

Confirmation of candidature is primarily a formative, rather than summative, process. The goal of the feedback is to provide general guidance and encouragement, and to assess the overall achievability of the research project.

AC's Confirmation of Candidature policies are detailed in the [Higher Degree Research Confirmation Policy](#).

Confirmation for MPhil and DMin Students

MPhil and DMin students will complete a draft of their proposal as part of their coursework assessment and will receive feedback from the course facilitator. In order to progress to a thesis, students must achieve a credit average across all coursework and must be recommended for continuation to thesis by the Director of the Graduate Research School (referred to hereafter as the Director). MPhil students who have achieved a distinction average across their coursework may also be recommended to transfer to the PhD.

Upon successful completion of the coursework, MPhil and DMin students will commence the thesis with their supervisors and should present their proposal within 6 months.

Confirmation of Candidature Process

The key steps of the process are as follows:

1. Students must email the completed confirmation proposal (in Word format) to the Director **at least 4 weeks** before the anticipated confirmation of candidature panel date. The Director will determine whether the proposal is ready to be presented to the panel or whether further work is required.
2. The student completes the [Confirmation of Candidature Submission Form](#), which is forwarded to the Panel Chair.
3. The students presents their proposal to the confirmation panel.
4. The Panel Chair prepares a report with feedback and a recommendation on the progress of candidature.

Preparing the Proposal

The student, in consultation with their supervision team, prepares a research proposal of between 5000 and 6000 words, including footnotes or in-text references, but excluding bibliography and appendices. The proposal is submitted to a confirmation of candidature panel for review, and then verbally presented at a seminar open to a broader audience.

The proposal should include, but is not limited to, the following information:

- The title of the thesis
- Abstract (approx. 150 words)
- Background and why this research is significant
- Research question and overview, including how the work represents a contribution to knowledge
- Literature review: What is the theoretical/intellectual/disciplinary context of the research? What are the theoretical underpinnings of the research? How will the project relate to existing research in the same field? (Approx. 3000 words)
- Research methods/research approach: explain how the research will be conducted (e.g., textual analysis, survey/questionnaire, interview, etc.). Justify this approach: how will this approach provide an answer to the research question?
- Proposed table of contents/structure of the thesis
- Work plan and timeline of key milestones
- Conclusion
- Bibliography/reference list
- An appendix containing a draft of any research instruments that will be used (e.g. survey questions, interview questions), in cases where your thesis uses human research. (Appendices are not included in your wordcount).

Guidelines for the Confirmation Panel

The confirmation presentation is attended by:

- the student;
- the supervision team;
- the panel, comprising the Chair and two AC faculty members;
- in some cases, the Chair may decide to appoint an external expert to the panel instead of an AC faculty member;
- Other members of the AC research community (faculty, HDR candidates, etc);
- Family and friends of the candidate are also welcome to attend.

The Chair is responsible for facilitating the process and ensuring that the session runs smoothly, keeps to time, and is a constructive event for the student. At the beginning of the formal proceedings (after the public presentation in the seminar), the Chair should inform members of the panel:

1. Confirmation of candidature is a formative, rather than summative, process that aims to provide general guidance and encouragement, and to assess the overall achievability of the research project.

2. The panel members will ask questions and discuss the proposal with the student for 15-20 minutes. Questions and feedback will be addressed in a constructive and encouraging manner.
3. The panel members will then meet in a breakout room for 20-25 minutes to deliberate and decide on a recommendation.
4. The decision and feedback will be communicated verbally to the candidate and supervision team for 5-10 minutes.
5. The formal report will be submitted by the Chair to the Graduate Research School within 2 business days. This report will be shared with the student and supervisors.

Advice to Students

Begin working on your proposal as soon as possible (for MPhil and DMin candidates, the two coursework subjects, RES701/801 and XXX706/806 will build towards the first draft of your proposal). By the time of your confirmation of candidature, the topic and scope of your research project should be well defined.

The confirmation process is designed with your interest in mind. The panel members want you to succeed, so if they propose major changes (or minor ones), it is because, in their professional judgment, these are required for you to succeed in your research. Be open to new ideas and suggestions. Even if the immediate outcome is not entirely successful, work through any issues with your supervision team – it will ensure that your project is as rigorous as possible.

Your public presentation should be well-structured and informative but is not an exhaustive summary of the written proposal. It should highlight key aspects of the project and should aim to communicate the project's importance to a wider research audience. You should prepare for the public presentation by producing an abridged, 20-minute version of your written proposal, as well as some simple accompanying slides. Please ensure that you read your (abridged) paper verbatim in the public seminar; avoid extemporising or speaking only from notes.

You are also strongly encouraged to attend confirmation presentations by other HDR students, as this will help you to understand what is involved.

If you find presenting in such a context challenging for any reason (e.g. medical issues, disability, etc), please contact the Graduate Research School beforehand to discuss ways we can support you.

Feedback from the Panel

Panel members should review the following criteria:

- Is there a clearly stated research question?
- Has the student demonstrated growing mastery of the literature in their field?
- Does the student have a clear and achievable method of research and the skills needed to undertake the research?
- How will the research contribute to knowledge?
- Is the project realistically achievable within the proposed timeframe?

At the end of the presentation, the Chair submits the HDR Confirmation Panel Report Form, with feedback from the Panel members and a formal recommendation. This is to be provided within 2 business days of the presentation.

The recommendations are as follows:

Decision by the Panel	Response from the Candidate
1 – The proposal is accepted	Continue with research project. Prepare for Ethics approval (where necessary)
2 – The proposal requires revisions – the student should resubmit the proposal within 3 months (FTE) or 6 months (PTE)	Work with your supervisors on the required revisions. Submit the updated proposal via the Confirmation of Candidature Submission Form, to be reviewed by the Panel Chair.
3 – The proposal is not accepted – the candidate will be required to present at a new panel within 3 months (FTE) or 6 months (PTE).	Work with your supervisors to prepare for a new confirmation panel. Submit the revised proposal via the Confirmation of Candidature Submission Form, for presentation at a second confirmation panel.

If a student presents a second time, the panel may comprise the same members or new members. After two unsuccessful attempts, a student will be liable for termination of candidature or transfer to another course.

The panel may recommend that an MPhil candidate transfer to a doctoral course, or vice versa. Any MPhil student wishing to transfer to a doctoral program should state this clearly in the conclusion of their written confirmation proposal.

Exemption from Confirmation

HDR students transferring to AC from another institution will be exempt from confirmation of candidature if they have already successfully completed confirmation (or an equivalent milestone) at another institution.

Appeal

If a student and/or a Principal Supervisor wishes to appeal the decision of the confirmation panel, the process in the Complaint and Grievance Resolution Policy is to be followed.