

CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE PROCEDURE



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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure sets out the roles, responsibilities and sequence of events for the confirmation of candidature milestone in CQUniversity Research Higher Degree (RHD) Courses.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This procedure applies to RHD candidates, supervisors, peer-review panellists and administrators at CQUniversity.

3 PROCEDURE

Requirement to undertake confirmation of candidature

- 3.1 RHD candidates at CQUniversity who are admitted into provisional candidature are required to successfully complete a confirmation of candidature before being admitted into full candidature.
- 3.2 Candidates transferring from another institution may be admitted directly into full candidature where they can demonstrate they have successfully completed an equivalent confirmation of candidature at their previous institution, to the satisfaction of Research Higher Degrees Committee (RHDC).

Timeline and sequence of events

- 3.3 The confirmation of candidature process is provided in [Appendix A](#).

3.4 The key roles and responsibilities of each party, as well as indicative timelines for each stage, is described in [Appendix B](#).

3.5 As described in the relevant RHD course rules, the confirmation of candidature deadlines for RHD candidates are:

- a) not more than 0.75 EFTSL for Masters by Research candidates
- b) not more than 1.0 EFTSL for Doctor of Philosophy candidates
- c) not more than 1.5 EFTSL for Doctor of Education candidates, and
- d) not more than 1.5 EFTSL for Doctor of Professional Studies candidates

Note: one EFTSL is equivalent to one year's full-time study.

The above values indicate the maximum time at which the fully approved confirmation must be achieved. Candidates are strongly encouraged to submit the confirmation of candidature portfolio at least three months ahead of these timeframes, to allow sufficient time for the peer-review process, revisions, and approvals steps.

3.6 A candidate may not present their confirmation of candidature documentation for consideration before all prescribed units of study have been completed, unless approval is granted by the Dean, School of Graduate Research.

Confirmation of candidature submission

3.7 The candidate, in consultation with their supervisory panel, will prepare a confirmation of candidature portfolio comprising:

- a) Section A: a full written thesis proposal of between 5,000 and 10,000 words, incorporating:
 - a thesis title, of no more than 25 words, which should be descriptive and unambiguous
 - a thesis abstract of no more than 250 words
 - a statement describing the aims, objectives and research questions
 - a review of literature, which should be conducted within an appropriate analytical framework to provide new knowledge (for example, a systematic, integrative or meta-analysis review), rather than a descriptive summary
 - a statement of the candidate's proposed contribution to the field of research (appropriate to the degree being sought)
 - a description of the project methodology, methods and/or research design, in sufficient detail to allow an assessment of the feasibility of the proposed project and appropriate match with the stated research questions
 - a thesis plan (proposed chapter outline and identification of prospective publications arising), and
 - references, using a recognised referencing system appropriate to the discipline area.
- b) Section B: a written statement of logistics, resources and compliance, incorporating:
 - resource requirements: a detailed description of the physical or other resources required to complete the research, particularly with respect to laboratory and/or equipment needs
 - permits and other external agreements: evidence of any site access agreements, relevant permits or permissions (e.g. National Park Permits), data sharing agreements, disbursement of intellectual property, or funding agreements with external parties, where these are required to complete the research
 - a gantt chart demonstrating the milestones and timelines for the proposed project
 - an itemised project budget (in the template prescribed by the School of Graduate Research) indicating all funding sources that will contribute to the project, and an indication of whether these have already been secured. Where projects being supported by an external funding source (e.g. industry partner), a copy of the funding agreement/research contract should be referenced.

- a statement regarding the need for animal and/or human ethics clearance (but not the application or clearance itself, unless pre-confirmation clearance has been negotiated)
- a risk profile summary (in the template prescribed by the School of Graduate Research). Candidates should note that full risk protocols and/or any certifications required will occur at a later point in the confirmation process
- the dates on which risk induction and risk training have been completed
- a research data management plan, outlining storage arrangements, access, and ownership of the research data (as per the requirements of the [Research Data Management Plan Policy and Procedure](#))
- assessment grade for any prescribed units completed, and
- a Turnitin Report generated on the Section A of the proposal.

Note: previous guidelines for the confirmation of candidature required an oral presentation as an assessable component. This is no longer required, except where requested by the Chair of the Peer-Review Panel (refer to section 3.19 below). However, candidates are strongly encouraged to present their work at an appropriate forum after successfully completing the confirmation milestone (refer to [Appendix A](#)).

- 3.8 Candidates are advised that each of the above-named sections under Part A and Part B should be clearly identified within their submission. Ideally Section A and Section B should be submitted as separate documents, as the peer-reviewers are supplied only with Part A for assessment purposes.

Peer-review assessment process

- 3.9 The confirmation of candidature milestone is recognised as an important opportunity to assess a candidate's progress toward specific and generic learning outcomes related to research, consistent with the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Thresholds Standards\) 2015](#) (Cwlth). Specifically, this includes:
- a) a detailed understanding of the specific topic of their research, within a broad understanding of the field of research
 - b) capacity to scope, design and conduct research projects independently
 - c) technical research skills and competence in the application of research methods, and
 - d) skills in analysis, critical evaluation and reporting of research, and in presentation, publication and dissemination of their research.
- 3.10 In making assessments, peer-reviewers will be provided with a template that outlines the expectations of the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (AQF) for the relevant degree level.
- 3.11 The Deputy Dean (Research) (or their nominee) will act as Chair of the peer-review process. The Chair should be a senior discipline expert with sufficient experience to be able to ensure adherence to this procedure.
- 3.12 The principal supervisor shall provide nominations to the Chair for the appointment of a Peer-Review Panel. A Panel will consist of the Chair, plus two reviewers (irrespective of the candidate's degree type).
- 3.13 Peer-Review Panels must have at least one reviewer external to the University, unless an exemption is provided by the Deputy Dean (Research) or Dean, School of Graduate Research.
- 3.13 The Chair may appoint an individual to the Peer-Review Panel where the nominee has demonstrated:
- an appropriate disciplinary and academic background of relevance to the content of the thesis proposal
 - sufficient expertise in the field of study to be able to provide an expert assessment; typically requiring that the individual holds a Research Doctorate Degree equivalent to a Level 10 award under the [AQF](#), and
 - a strong reputation in the field, and evidence of recent research activity; as demonstrated by peer-reviewed publications output, receipt of research funding and/or research training activity.

- 3.14 Members of the Peer-Review Panel must declare any real or perceived conflict of interest (either professional, personal or commercial) exists between the individual and the candidate and/or supervisory panel. The Chair, in consultation with the Dean, School of Graduate Research, will determine whether such a conflict results in ineligibility to serve on the Peer-Review Panel.
- 3.15 All parties are encouraged to consult the Australian Council of Graduate Research's Guidelines for Managing Conflicts of Interest, which provides assistance in identifying major and minor types of conflict. This document is available on the Research Moodle site and can be provided to external reviewers on request.
- 3.16 Please note: for the internal (CQUniversity) reviewer, holding employment at the same institution as the candidate and/or supervisory panel is not regarded as a conflict of interest. However, a reviewer must not have a line management relationship with the candidate or any member of the supervision panel. Management of other prospective conflicts of interest, such as shared supervision with another candidate, co-publication or joint research projects, shall be considered on a case by case basis.
- 3.17 External peer-reviewers, not including the Chair, shall be eligible to receive an honorarium payment consistent with the rates applied for the examination of honours thesis, as published by Universities Australia from time to time. For external reviewers, this will be in the form of direct payment. CQUniversity staff, including the Chair, shall not attract an honorarium.
- 3.18 The Peer-Review Panel shall assess Section A of the Confirmation of Candidature Submission, in respect of the potential of the candidate and the project, and having regard to the [AQF](#) descriptors appropriate to the degree.
- 3.19 The Chair shall receive the Reviewer Reports and communicate any revisions required to the candidate and supervisory team (through the principal supervisor). The candidate will undertake any revisions required, to the satisfaction of the Chair; and such revisions should be clearly documented (in the template supplied by the School of Graduate Research).
- 3.20 At the request of the Chair, the candidate, supervisor and/or Peer-Review Panel may be required to:
- attend an oral presentation of the proposal given by the candidate, and/or
 - participate in an interview to confirm that all revisions have been completed to the satisfaction of the Chair. Such an interview may take place physically, or by tele- or video-conferenced means.
- 3.21 In the event that the two peer-review reports are divergent in their assessments, the Chair or Dean, School of Graduate Research may elect to appoint a third peer-reviewer to help reach a moderated outcome. This individual will meet the requirements as already described in sections 3.9 to 3.18 above.

Confirmation of candidature reference group

- 3.22 The Research Higher Degrees Committee shall appoint a Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group, which will include membership drawn from:
- the Dean, School of Graduate Research
 - the Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (or their nominee)
 - the Chair, Animal Ethics Committee (or their nominee), as required
 - a nominee from the Occupational Health and Safety Unit
 - Expert consultation (as required), and
 - the Chair of each Peer-Review Panel (as applicable).
- 3.23 The Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group shall consider, for each candidate:
- both Section A and B of the candidate's submission
 - the Chair's Report
 - the reports from the Peer-Review Panel.

Recommendations

- 3.24 The Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group shall make one of the following determinations:
- candidature be confirmed, or
 - candidature is provisionally confirmed, subject to the appropriate ethics, risk and any other certifications being secured, or
 - candidature not yet confirmed (with specific advice regarding action required).
- 3.25 For any candidate, the Reference Group, through the Chair, may require changes to the course of research and study or take such other action as is deemed appropriate.
- 3.26 A candidate who is required to secure certifications, or undertake further work, must do so within the time period allowed for confirmation of candidature as stated within the Course Rules for the degree. Failure to do so may result in the candidate being issued with a request to show cause why the candidature should not be terminated.
- 3.27 The confirmation of candidature is not finalised until the candidate has performed all activities required by the Reference Group, via the Dean, School of Graduate Research. A candidate who has successfully completed the confirmation milestone will be advised in writing by the School of Graduate Research.
- 3.28 Where a candidate's progress has been delayed for reasons outside of their control (e.g. a protracted peer-review process), the Dean, School of Graduate Research may recommend that a period of administrative leave be recorded such that the candidate is not disadvantaged in completing the rest of their research program.

Appeals

- 3.29 A candidate who is not satisfied with the confirmation of candidature outcome, or who believes that due process was not followed, may appeal the decision by submitting a request to the Academic Appeals Committee in accordance with the grounds for appeal, timelines and processes in the [Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#).

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance, monitoring and review

- 4.1 The Dean, School of Graduate Research and Coordinator, Research Higher Degrees is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and ensuring compliance with this procedure.

Reporting

- 4.2 No additional reporting is required.

Records management

- 4.3 The School of Graduate Research is responsible for records management.
- 4.4 All records relevant to this document are to be maintained in a recognised University recordkeeping system.

5 DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 Terms not defined in this document may be in the University [glossary](#).

6 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

[Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#)

[Australian Qualifications Framework](#)

[Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group Terms of Reference](#)

[Higher Education Standards Framework \(Thresholds Standards\) 2015 \(CwIth\)](#)

[Research Data Management Policy and Procedure](#)

[Research Higher Degree Course Rules Policy and Procedure](#)

[Research Higher Degree \(Offshore\) Course Rules Policy and Procedure](#)

7 FEEDBACK

7.1 University staff and students may provide feedback about this document by emailing policy@cqu.edu.au.

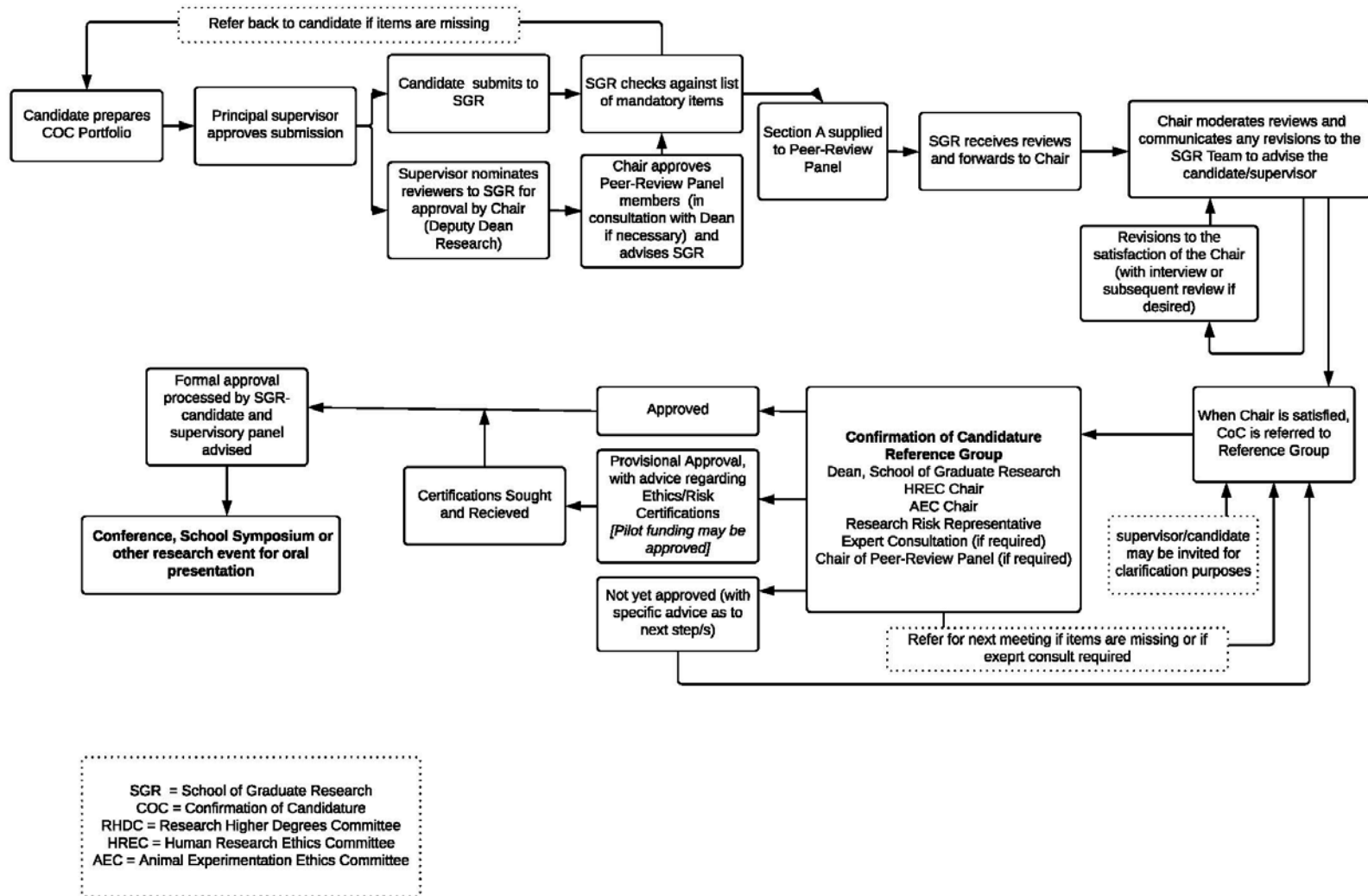
8 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Research Higher Degrees Committee
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	N/A
Administrator	Dean, School of Graduate Research
Next Review Date	16/08/2021

Approval and Amendment History	Details
Original Approval Authority and Date	Academic Board 20/07/2008
Amendment Authority and Date	Academic Board 25/11/2009; Academic Board 6/03/2013; Academic Board 26/03/2014; Academic Board 19/08/2016; Executive Committee of Academic Board 20/12/2016; Administrative update Dean of Graduate Studies 5/04/2017; Research Higher Degrees Committee 24/05/2017; Research Higher Degrees Committee 16/08/2018; Minor Amendments Administrator Approved – Dean, School of Graduate Research 20/11/2018.
Notes	

9 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Confirmation of candidature process



Appendix B: Confirmation of candidature roles, responsibilities and indicative timelines

	Candidate	Supervisory Panel	Chair of Peer-Review Panel	Peer-Review Panel	Confirmation Sub-Committee	Dean, School of Graduate Research	SGR	Indicative Timeline*
Prepare & Submit Section A&B of submission	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 3-4 months (masters) Within 6 months (doctoral)
Submit nominations for Peer-Reviewers		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 1 week of CoC submission
Check Submission for Completeness							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 1 week
Approve Peer-Reviewers			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ^		
Invite Peer-Reviewers							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 1 week
Undertake Peer-Review on Section A				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				Within 4 weeks
Collate and sent Review Reports to Chair							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 1 week
Moderate Review Reports and advise if revisions are required			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Action revisions to the satisfaction of the Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ^^				Within 4 weeks
Refer Confirmation to the CoC Reference Group			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 1 week
CoC Reference Group deliberate			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Within 2 weeks
Advise of Recommendation					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Within 1 week
Seek Additional Certifications/Clearances	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						Within 4 weeks
Advise of Confirmation outcome						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Oral Presentation (non-assessable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						

Appendix C: Escalations

	Within 1 week of initial request		Within 2 weeks of initial request			Within 3 weeks of initial request		Within 4 weeks of initial request		Within 5 weeks of initial request			Within 6 weeks of initial request	
	Escalations		Escalations			Escalations		Escalations		Escalations			Escalations	
	DDR	DGS	DDR	DGS	DDR	DGS	DDR	DGS	Super-visor	DDR	DGS	Super-visor	DDR	DGS
			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Reviewer Nominations (Supervisor)	Principal supervisor to provide reviewer nominations		SGR to send follow-up email indicating supervisor has 5 days to nominate reviewers			If not received within 5 days, SGR to advise DDR it is their responsibility to nominate reviewers								
Reviewer Reports – Internal Reviewer			SGR to send courtesy email reminding reviewers they have 2 weeks to provide reports					After the 4 week mark, SGR to send an overdue notice advising the reviewer has 5 working days to provide the report		SGR to send a second notice advising the reviewer will be stood down if report is not received within 5 working days			SGR to advise DDR – reviewer will be stood down and an alternate replacement appointed	
Reviewer Reports – External Reviewer			SGR to send courtesy email reminding reviewers they have 2 weeks to provide reports					After the four week mark, SGR to send an overdue notice advising the reviewer has 5 working days to provide the report		SGR to send a second notice advising the reviewer will be stood down if report is not received within 5 working days SGR to send a separate email to the supervisor, flagging that a replacement reviewer may be required			SGR to advise DDR and ask the principal supervisor for an alternate reviewer nomination	
Chair's Reports/moderated outcomes			Managed on case-by- case basis. If request is outstanding for more than 2 weeks, advise DGS											