CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE PROCEDURE

CONTENTS

1   PURPOSE

1.1   This procedure sets out the roles, responsibilities and sequence of events for the confirmation of candidature (CoC) 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 complete confirmation of candidature before being admitted into full candidature.

3.2   Candidates transferring from another institution may be admitted directly into full candidature if they demonstrate successful completion of an equivalent confirmation of candidature at their previous institution, to the satisfaction of Dean School of Graduate Research.

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 The deadlines for achieving a fully approved CoC are as per Table 1. Candidates are expected 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.

Table 1:

	Maximum deadline for CoC submission by the candidate	Maximum deadline for provisional or Full CoC approval^
Masters by Research	On or before 0.5 EFTSL	not more than 0.75 EFTSL
Doctor of Philosophy	On or before 0.75 EFTSL	not more than 1.0 EFTSL
Doctor of Education	On or before 1.25 EFTSL	not more than 1.5 EFTSL
Doctor of Professional Studies	On or before 1.25 EFTSL	not more than 1.5 EFTSL

^Inclusive of peer review process, revisions and Reference Group approval. This timeline may or may not include ethics clearances. A candidate will remain in 'not yet approved' or 'provisionally approved status' until such time that ethics approvals or other necessary permissions are secured.

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

3.6 A candidate must complete all units of prescribed study prior to lodging the confirmation of candidature documentation, unless an exemption 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) Part 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 (as appropriate to the disciplinary field)

- 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. For candidates conducting research in qualitative fields where literature reviews are not permitted (e.g. Grounded Theory), this section should provide an alternative analysis (e.g. compare and contrast amongst qualitative methodologies)

- 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 demonstrating an appropriate match with the stated research questions

- a thesis plan (proposed chapter outline and identification of prospective publications arising, where applicable), and

- references, using a recognised referencing system appropriate to the discipline area.

b) Part 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 specialised 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 will be required to complete the research

- a Gantt chart demonstrating the key milestones and timelines for the proposed project

- an itemised project budget (in the template prescribed by the School of Graduate Research) describing all funding sources that will contribute to the project, and an indication of whether these have already been secured. Where projects are 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 certificate itself, unless pre-confirmation clearance has been negotiated)

- a risk profile summary (in the template prescribed by the School of Graduate Research)

- the occupational health and safety research risk approval code

- a research data management plan (in the template prescribed by the University), outlining storage arrangements, access, and ownership of the research data (as per the requirements of the Research Data Management Plan Policy and Procedure)

- an ORCID identification number that has been registered to the candidate's name (available from https://orcid.org/)

- assessment grade for any prescribed units completed

- a list of the Professional Research Tasks that have been submitted (this is applicable to Professional Practice Doctorate Candidates only), and

- a Turnitin Report generated on the Part A of the proposal, noting that this item requires a full report and not simply a TurnItIn receipt number.

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   Part A and Part B should be submitted at the same time, but as separate and clearly labelled documents. The peer-reviewers are only provided with the confirmation of candidature portfolio (Part A) for review.

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 Postgraduate Research Coordinator (or their nominee) will act as Chair of the peer-review process. The Chair should have sufficient disciplinary knowledge and an understanding of the Confirmation process, to be able to ensure adherence to this procedure.

3.12   The principal supervisor shall provide nominations to the School of Graduate Research for approval by 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 Dean School of Graduate Research. Individuals who hold casual, fixed-term, adjunct or Emeritus positions with CQUniversity are eligible as internal reviewers only.

3.14   The Chair may appoint an individual to the Peer-Review Panel where the nominee has demonstrated:

- an appropriate disciplinary and academic background relevant to the research topic

- 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.

3.15   Supervisors and nominated members of the Peer-Review Panel must declare any real or perceived conflict of interest (either professional, personal or commercial) existing between the individual, 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.

3.16   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.

3.17   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.

3.18   External peer-reviewers will be eligible to receive an honorarium payment consistent with the rates applied for the examination of honours thesis. For external reviewers, this will be in the form of direct payment. Internal reviewers, the Chair, and any other University employee shall not attract an honorarium.

3.19   The Peer-Review Panel shall assess Part A of the CoC Submission, in respect of the potential of the candidate and the project, and having regard to the AQF descriptors appropriate to the degree.

3.20   The School of Graduate Research shall receive the Reviewer Reports and communicate any revisions required by the Chair and the Reviewers to the candidate and supervisory team. 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).

3.21   At the request of the Chair, the candidate, supervisor and/or Peer-Review Panel may be required to:

a)   attend an oral presentation of the proposal given by the candidate, and/or

b)   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.

3.22   In the event that the two peer-review reports are divergent in their assessments, the Chair or Dean School of Graduate Research may appoint a third peer-reviewer to help reach a moderated outcome. This individual will meet the requirements as already described in sections 3.13 to 3.15 above.

Confirmation of candidature reference group

3.23 The Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group, will comprise of:

- 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, and
- expert consultation (as required).

3.24 The Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group shall consider, for each candidate:

- both Part A and B of the candidate's submission (including any revisions)
- the Chair's Report, and
- the reports from the Peer-Review Panel.

Recommendations

3.25 The Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group shall make one of the following determinations:

- candidature be confirmed
- candidature is provisionally confirmed, subject to the appropriate ethics, risk and any other certifications being secured or minor matters being clarified, or
- confirmation of candidature not yet accepted (with specific advice given regarding further actions).

3.26 Prior to granting fully confirmed status, the Dean School of Graduate Research may require changes to the course of research and study or take such other action as is deemed appropriate.

3.27 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.

3.28 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.

3.29 Where a candidate's progress has been significantly 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. Nevertheless, candidates are strongly encouraged to consider the anticipated timeframes for the CoC process and to form a plan for continuation of their research program whilst awaiting peer-reviewer reports and approvals.

Appeals

3.30 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 outlined 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 implementing, 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   Employees must manage records in accordance with the Records Management Policy and Procedure. This includes retaining these records in a recognised University recordkeeping information system.

4.5   University records must be retained for the minimum periods specified in the University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule on the Queensland State Archives website. Before disposing of any records, approval must be sought through the Records Management Office (email records@cqu.edu.au).

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 (Cwlth)

Research Data Management Plan Policy and Procedure

Research Higher Degree Course Rules Policy and Procedure

Research Higher Degree (Offshore) Course Rules Policy and Procedure

7   FEEDBACK

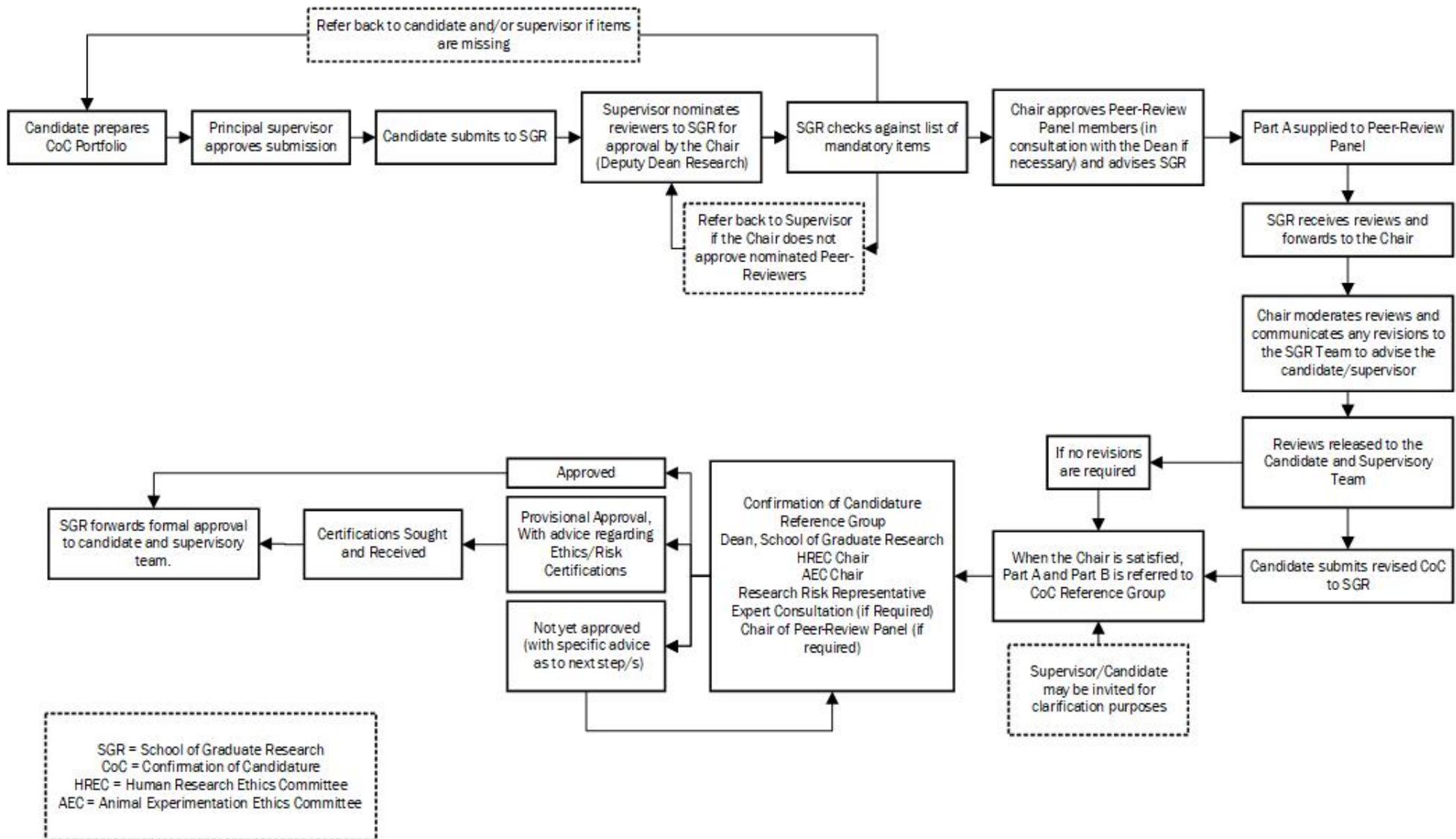7.1   Feedback about this document can be emailed to policy@cqu.edu.au.

8   APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Research Committee (delegated by Academic Board)
Advisory Committee	N/A
Administrator	Dean School of Graduate Research
Next Review Date	23/09/2023

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; Dean, School of Graduate Research 20/11/2018; Dean, School of Graduate Research 13/12/2019; Research Committee 23/09/2020.
Notes	

9 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Confirmation of candidature process

Refer back to candidate and/or supervisor if items are missing

Candidate prepares CoC Portfolio → Principal supervisor approves submission → Candidate submits to SGR → Supervisor nominates reviewers to SGR for approval by the Chair (Deputy Dean Research) → SGR checks against list of mandatory items → Chair approves Peer-Review Panel members (in consultation with the Dean if necessary) and advises SGR → Part A supplied to Peer-Review Panel

Refer back to Supervisor if the Chair does not approve nominated Peer-Reviewers

SGR receives reviews and forwards to the Chair

Chair moderates reviews and communicates any revisions to the SGR Team to advise the candidate/supervisor

Reviews released to the Candidate and Supervisory Team

If no revisions are required

Candidate submits revised CoC to SGR

When the Chair is satisfied, Part A and Part B is referred to CoC Reference Group

Supervisor/Candidate may be invited for clarification purposes

Confirmation of Candidature Reference Group
Dean, School of Graduate Research
HREC Chair
AEC Chair
Research Risk Representative
Expert Consultation (if Required)
Chair of Peer-Review Panel (if required)

Approved

Provisional Approval, With advice regarding Ethics/Risk Certifications

Not yet approved (with specific advice as to next step/s)

Certifications Sought and Received

SGR forwards formal approval to candidate and supervisory team.

SGR = School of Graduate Research
CoC = Confirmation of Candidature
HREC = Human Research Ethics Committee
AEC = Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee

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

	Candidate	Supervisory Panel	Chair of Peer-Review Panel	Peer-Review Panel	CoC Reference Group	Dean School of Graduate Research	School of Graduate Research	*Indicative Timeline**
Prepare and Submit Part A and B of submission at least three months ahead of reaching the EFTSL deadlines (refer to Indicative timeline)	☑	☑					☑	0.75 EFTSL (Masters) 1.0 EFTSL(PhD) 1.5 EFTSL (Doc ED and Doc Prof)
Submit nominations for Peer-Reviewers		☑					☑	Within 1 week of CoC submission
Check Submission for Completeness							☑	Within 1 week
Approve Peer-Reviewers			☑			☑^		
Invite Peer-Reviewers							☑	Within 1 week
Undertake Peer-Review on Part A				☑				Within 6 weeks
Collate and send Review Reports to Chair							☑	Within 1 week
Moderate Review Reports and advise if revisions are required			☑					Within 2 weeks
Action revisions to the satisfaction of the Chair	☑	☑	☑	☑^^				Within 4 weeks
Refer Confirmation to the CoC Reference Group			☑				☑	Within 1 week
CoC Reference Group deliberations			☑		☑			Within 4 weeks
Advise of Recommendation					☑		☑	Within 1 week
Seek Additional Certifications/Clearances	☑	☑						Within 4 weeks
Advise of Confirmation outcome						☑	☑	
Oral Presentation (non-assessable)	☑	☑						

Appendix C: Escalations

	1 week from initial request	2 weeks from initial request	3 weeks from initial request	4 weeks from initial request	5 weeks from initial request	6 weeks from initial request	Escalation Succession
Reviewer Nominations by Principal Supervisor	SGR to send follow-up email to principal supervisor	SGR to send follow-up email indicating supervisor has 5 working days to nominate reviewers					Supervisor
			SGR to advise PRC it is their responsibility to nominate reviewers				PRC
				SGR to advise DGR reviewers have not been nominated			DGR
Reviewer Reports – Internal and External Reviewers		SGR to send courtesy email reminding reviewers they have 2 weeks to provide reports		SGR to send an overdue notice to the reviewer	SGR to advise reviewer they will be stood down if report is not received within five working days	SGR to advise reviewer they have been stood down	Reviewer
					SGR to send a separate email to the supervisor, flagging a replacement reviewer may be required	SGR to email supervisor advising reviewer has been stood down and request an alternative reviewer be nominated	Supervisor
						SGR to include PRC in email to supervisor	PRC
Chair's Report	SGR to send follow-up email to Chair						PRC
		Email DGR to advise report has not been received					DGR