HDR Confirmation of Candidature Procedure

Version	1.0
Short description	This procedure outlines the Confirmation of Candidature process for the PhD and MPhil degrees
Relevant to	HDR candidates and supervisors
Authority	Academic Board
Policy owner	Director Higher Degree Research
Responsible office	Research Services
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Date effective	1 April 2024
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Related Avondale documents	HDR Rules of Candidature
	Ethical Conduct Principles
Related legislation	Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
Key words	candidate, confirmation, HDR, MPhil, PhD, progression, proposal, research

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This document outlines Avondale University's (Avondale's) Confirmation of Candidature process for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

1.2 The purpose of the confirmation process is to support candidates in the early stages of their candidature, and to allow them to receive objective confirmation that their research direction is sound, the methodologies appropriate and the standard of writing at the relevant level required of PhD and MPhil candidates. Any difficulties that may impede successful completion should be identified and remedied at the time of confirmation.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This procedure applies to all Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates and supervisors.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 **Candidate (also HDR candidate):** a Higher Degree Research (HDR) student who is enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

3.2 **Candidature:** the period of time a candidate is enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research course.

3.3 **Early candidature plan:** a form completed by a new candidate and their supervisors within the first three months of enrolment. It is designed to ensure the candidate and their supervisors discuss significant milestones, identify areas for skills development and training, and begin to plan the HDR journey.

3.4 **Principal Supervisor:** an Avondale staff member who has been appointed to lead a team of two or more supervisors in the provision of guidance and assistance to a candidate in the undertaking of the relevant degree requirements. The Principal Supervisor has official responsibility for the overall management of candidature from enrolment to final thesis examination and will be allocated higher workload hours than the Co-supervisor.

3.5 **Research proposal:** a structured document that outlines the research topic, why it is important, and how it will be investigated.

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR CONFIRMATION

4.1 Candidates will present their research proposal to a Confirmation Panel within:

- PhD – 6-12 months of full-time enrolment, or 12-24 months of part-time enrolment.
- MPhil – 6 months of full-time enrolment, or 12 months of part-time enrolment.

4.2 Candidates must ensure they have done the following before initiating the Confirmation Procedure:

a. attended an Induction/Orientation session with the Director HDR, and completed the Induction to Research module on the HDR Hub;

b. completed the Academic Integrity Module (AIM); and

c. submitted an *Early Candidature Plan.*

5. CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

5.1 The Principal Supervisor must notify Research Services of the candidate's intention to submit a research proposal approximately six weeks prior to the expected completion of the research proposal.

5.2 The Principal Supervisor must provide Research Services with a list of three possible dates for the presentation, and five suggested panel member names (internal or external to Avondale).

5.3 Research Services will advise the candidate and supervisory team of the final presentation details: three panel members, the date and venue for the presentation, and a submission deadline for the proposal.

5.4 Any conflicts of interest arising from the appointment of panel members at any stage should be acknowledged to Research Services.

6. FORMAT & CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

6.1 The candidate's research may be amended later and refined beyond the parameters of the research proposal. However, the proposal should be a clear and comprehensive overview of the research project, from which there should be minimal deviation between commencing the research and the final submission of the thesis, unless circumstances change significantly.

6.2 The research proposal should be 10,000-12,000 words for a PhD or 7,000-10,000 words for a MPhil (including words in figures, tables and footnotes, but excluding words in bibliographies, reference lists and appendices), and a maximum of 55 pages for a PhD and 45 pages for a MPhil.

6.3 The format of the final proposal should be as follows:

   a) Title page which should include the following information:
   - Candidate name
   - Course (PhD or MPhil)
   - Title of research topic
   - Supervisory team names

   b) Brief biographical sketch of the candidate

   c) Table of Contents

   d) Abstract of 200 words or less

   e) Contents
   - Introduction and purpose of the study
   - Literature Review
   - Methodology and methods, including research questions and ethical considerations where appropriate
   - Data collection and analysis, where appropriate
   - Resources required

- Proposed schedule and timeline for the phases of the study based on the expected submission date of the thesis
- Proposed schedule and timeline for the preparation and submission of publications (for PhD thesis by publication)
- Proposed schedule and timeline for the preparation and presentation of performances (where relevant)
- References and appendices
- Publications to date
- Publishing Plan

7. RESEARCH INTEGRITY

7.1 All researchers (including but not limited to HDR candidates and their supervisors) are responsible for adhering to the principles of academic and research integrity. Roles and responsibilities of researchers in maintaining and managing academic and research integrity are specified in the *Academic Integrity Policy* and *Research Code of Conduct*.

8. SUBMISSION OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

8.1 The candidate must upload the research proposal to Turnitin via a link provided on the HDR Hub Moodle site at least four weeks prior to the Confirmation Panel presentation.

8.2 The Principal Supervisor must check the Turnitin report and work with the candidate to address any required changes prior to the submission to the Confirmation Panel.

8.3 The candidate must email the research proposal to Research Services for circulation to the Confirmation Panel at least three weeks prior to the Confirmation Panel presentation.

8.4 The candidate is responsible for the quality of the research proposal and should seek guidance and clarification from supervisors or Research Services if they have queries relating to the proposal or presentation.

9. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

9.1 The research proposal will be assessed by the Confirmation Panel according to the following criteria:

Doctor of Philosophy

a) Design and plan an original piece of research, taking into account research methodology, research integrity and ethics.

b) Demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge related to their project.

c) Identify a clear and manageable topic that fills a gap evident in previous research at the frontier of a field of work or learning, in one or more fields of study.

d) Demonstrate substantial knowledge of methodology and methods, with scholarly justification for their choices, relevant to the discipline or area of learning.

e) Provide comprehensive links between the topic, literature review and methodological plans relevant to their proposed project.

Master of Philosophy

a) Design and plan a substantial piece of research, taking into account research methodology, research integrity and ethics.

b) Demonstrate an advanced and integrated understanding of a complex and specialised body of knowledge related to their project.

c) Identify a clear and manageable topic that fills a gap evident in previous research and recent developments, in one or more disciplines.

d) Demonstrate advanced knowledge of methodology and methods, with scholarly justification for their choices, relevant to the discipline or area of learning.

e) Provide clear links between the topic, literature review and methodological plans relevant to their proposed project.

9.2 An MPhil candidate attempting to upgrade to the PhD will be assessed at the level expected for PhD Confirmation of Candidature (see the *HDR Rules for Candidature* for upgrade eligibility criteria).

10. CONFIRMATION PRESENTATION PROGRAM

10.1 The duration of the Confirmation presentation is approximately two hours and follows the following program:

a) Introduction of candidate and panel (5 minutes).

b) Candidate presentation of final proposal (20-30 minutes).

The candidate may use presentation software (such as PowerPoint) to make their presentation to the panel.

c) Panel discussion with candidate and supervisors to pose questions, consider responses and provide guidance (15-30 minutes).

d) Panel discussion with supervisors (without candidate) to pose questions and consider responses (15-30 minutes).

e) Panel discussion (without candidate or supervisors) to determine outcome (15-30 minutes).

f) Conclusion - outcome communicated to candidate and supervisors (15 minutes).

11. OUTCOMES DETERMINED BY THE CONFIRMATION PANEL

11.1 The Confirmation Panel selects one of the following outcomes:

a) Candidature is confirmed.

b) Candidature is confirmed subject to minor conditions.

c) Candidate is required to meet the conditions set by the Panel within eight weeks.

d) Confirmation of candidature is deferred.

e) Candidate is required to resubmit and present to the Panel within three months.

f) Candidature is not confirmed, and candidate will not be able to pursue the degree.

11.2 Where the candidate is aiming to upgrade from an MPhil to a PhD, the outcomes of the Confirmation Panel will include a decision about whether the candidate remains in the MPhil or is upgraded to the PhD.

11.3 The process for determining how any conditions set by the Confirmation Panel will be assessed will form part of the Panel discussion at the end of the program. The decision will be communicated to the candidate and included in the Confirmation Report.

12. SHOW CAUSE

12.1 Where candidature is not confirmed, the panel will make a recommendation to the HDR Committee that the candidate 'Show Cause' as to why their candidature should not be discontinued. The outcome will be reported to the Research Committee. Research Services will notify the candidate and Student Administration Services of the outcome. Candidates may appeal the decision in accordance with the *Appeal Policy and Appeal Procedure (Academic)*.

13. CONFIRMATION REPORT

13.1 Research Services will provide a final report summarising the decisions, recommendations and commendations of the panel.

13.2 The report will be circulated to the panel members for accuracy and then emailed to the candidate and supervisory team.

Table of amendments

Version Number	1.0	Replaces Version	NEW
Date Published	15 March 2024	Scheduled Review Date	March 2029
Approving Body	Academic Board	Approval Date	6 March 2024
Policy Owner	Director HDR	Date first introduced	1 April 2024
Short description of amendment	• Combination of previous *Confirmation of Candidature Procedure* and *Guidelines for the Development of the Final Research Proposal* with major revisions to the content from both documents • Updates to accommodate recommendations from reaccreditation panel, including amended marking criteria • Updates to reflect changes of structure, titles and language		