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## ATTAINMENT OF MID-CANDIDATURE MILESTONE (PhD & MPhil) – REVIEW GUIDELINES

### Overview

The mid-candidature review milestone represents a mid-point between confirmation of candidature and thesis review milestones. This milestone is to be attained by no later than 24 months FTE (full-time equivalent) for mid-candidature review for PhD program, (between 18-24 months FTE); 12 months FTE for MPhil program. The due date recorded on SI-net is as advised by the Institute when the confirmation of candidature milestone was achieved, and the candidate is expected to achieve the milestone between 3 months before and 3 months after this date. The achievement of this milestone reassures the candidate, advisory team and Institute that:

- the project is on track for completion within candidature duration; and
- the candidate's research and other professional skills are developing appropriately

Assessment of attainment of this milestone is made on the basis of evidence including:

1. **Written work** completed by the candidate,

This demonstrates that the candidate is developing their ability to communicate their research to a wider audience and has had the opportunity to receive feedback on their research project and research writing from outside the advisory team. Appropriate formats for this piece of academic writing are determined by the Institute so that it is appropriate to the candidate's disciplinary field and the structure of the candidate's research project.

2. **Oral work** completed by the candidate,

This demonstrates that the candidate is developing their ability to communicate their research to a wider audience. It provides them with the opportunity to receive constructive feedback on their research project and their verbal presentation skills from outside the advisory team.

3. **Interview/dialogue** with the candidate.

This provides an opportunity to:

- assess the candidate's development of expertise in their field of research,
- assess the overall plan for the thesis structure,
- review the planned timeline to submission of the thesis for assessment,
- review the composition of the advisory team and the roles of its members, and
- reassess the human, financial and physical resources needed to bring the project to a timely and satisfactory completion.

Each recommendation that a milestone has or has not been achieved is a collective decision reached by a group of Institute representatives on the basis of evidence provided by the candidate and advice provided by the advisory team.

The **candidate** - To assist the panel you are requested to provide a document covering the following aspects at least one week prior to your review.

- Restate Aim of the Study: Objectives
- An updated literature review
- Updated problem statement and hypothesis
- Updated draft Statement of Originality including contributions to knowledge
- Draft statement of sustainability outcomes/contribution
- Summary of work so far and time breakdown since enrolment (e.g. experimental work, results, analysis, modeling, etc.)
- Draft Chapters (present all drafted chapters to the review committee)
- Research Plan to completion
- Resources required to completion, such as laboratory equipment, fieldwork, etc.
- Timetable for project to completion
- Updated Draft Thesis Chapter Outline
- Review Research training development plan (courses and workshops completed and/or planned)
- Publications and conferences attended

The purpose of the written submission is to demonstrate to the panel that you have understood the objectives of your project, and that after reading and analyzing previous peer reviewed work on this topic, **the work thus prepared will form part of your final thesis and so this should not be regarded as an additional task, rather an opportunity to ensure your preparation is leading towards a convincing presentation at the thesis review.**

The candidate will be expected to give an oral presentation to an appropriate group of disciplinary peers for the purpose of receiving expert and constructive advice about the proposed project, its scope and feasibility and the appropriateness of the theoretical approach, methodology and/or experimental design. This will put the research topic in context, outline progress to-date and indicate a plan for completion.

The procedure recommended for the review meeting itself is as follows:

- Oral presentation – (usually in the form of a seminar to the SMI research community) using PowerPoint (upto 45 minutes)
  - Discussions with whole panel
  - Discussions with the candidate in the absence of the advisors
  - Discussions by panel in the absence of the candidate
  - Feedback to the candidate from whole panel
  - Review Panel Recommendations.
- The **Principal Advisor** is responsible for nominating/organising the:
    - composition of mid-candidature committee including the chair of the committee (see below)
    - date/time/venue for review and seminar at a time suitable for both mid-candidature confirmation committee and candidate.

**Please note:** When the seminar and review dates/times/venues have been organised (the candidate may be asked to assist) and particulars of the mid-candidature confirmation committee are known, the **Principal Advisor** or **Candidate** is requested to email A/Prof Dominic Howarth ([d.howarth@uq.edu.au](mailto:d.howarth@uq.edu.au)) with copy to Marilyn Wilckens on ([m.wilckens@uq.edu.au](mailto:m.wilckens@uq.edu.au)) with a notice of these arrangements.

- The previous **confirmation committee** should be reconvened if possible, which should consist of at least three members from the Institute must be appointed for each candidate, essential members being:
  - postgraduate coordinator to be chair of this committee
  - at least one member of staff or a representative from an appropriate external organisation who is **not** a member of the advisory team and who has expertise in the general area of the thesis project
  - a representative candidate member is optional.

Success at the mid-candidature milestone demonstrates the candidate is likely to produce an assessable thesis using the resources available to them at The University of Queensland in a timely manner.

Forms and Guidelines are provided to candidates enrolled through the SMI:

at the Institute's Induction Session;  
six to eight weeks prior to milestone review due date; or  
on request at any time

- **Extension for Attainment of Milestone:** If the candidate has not attempted the Institute's mid-candidature process, the Committee may recommend an **extension** of a milestone due date to a specified date (The maximum length of an extension is 6 months FTE) on the reasons stated on the extension form. (attached). Only one such extension is possible.

## Responsibilities & Administration

As the Institute Director's delegate, the SMI Postgraduate Coordinator has the formal responsibility for making recommendations to the Dean, UQ Graduate Institute about the candidate's progress towards and/or achievement of milestones. Therefore, at a minimum the postgraduate coordinator and the advisory team must be involved in the decision-making around each milestone.

It is a common practice for the Postgraduate Coordinator to delegate to another staff member the responsibility of participating with the advisory team in reviewing the candidate's progress towards achieving each milestone, particularly in those cases where the Postgraduate Coordinator's disciplinary background is not closely aligned to the candidate's project. In such cases, the Postgraduate Coordinator continues to carry out their role as the Institute decision-maker who acts on the recommendation of those who participate in the components. It is therefore important that the Postgraduate Coordinator receives appropriately detailed feedback that guides them in making their recommendation to the Dean, UQ Graduate School.

- The **postgraduate research administration office**, at approximately six-eight weeks prior to the candidate's mid-candidature review due date will email to the candidate (cc to the advisory team and postgraduate coordinator) the following documentation:
  - *Mid-Candidature – Candidate Advice* memorandum
  - *Attainment of Milestone(PhD & Mphil) Guidelines*
  - *Attainment of Milestone* form
  - *Attainment of Milestone Review – Mid-Candidature – Feedback and Advice* (this document provides **compulsory** feedback for both candidate and advisory team)
  - *Extension for Attainment of Milestone* form

**Please note:** Completed and signed documentation should be forwarded to the Postgraduate Research Administration Officer, Marilyn Wilckens as soon as possible on conclusion of the Mid-Candidature process.

- **In the event:** the candidate does not agree with the committee's assessment, if there are major differences remaining regarding any aspect of the project, and/or major resource questions need to be addressed, then these matters should be addressed to the **Postgraduate Coordinator** (A/Prof Dominic Howarth-d.howarth@uq.edu.au) for resolution as soon as possible.

It is expected that a number of issues that may affect the candidate's studies will be raised by the committee for discussion. This is also an opportunity for the candidate to raise any concerns and issues with regard to his/her studies. Following discussions, the committee will make recommendations on the candidature.

- **Documentation:** On conclusion of the review process the Principal Advisor together with the Postgraduate Coordinator should summarise the strengths, achievements and developmental needs of the candidate, decisions made about resources, scope and overall direction of the project and offer suggestions towards the successful completion of candidature.
- It is requested to forward the *Attainment of Milestone* form together with the *Attainment of Milestone Review-Mid-Candidature – Feedback and Advice* form and the *Extension for Attainment of Milestone* form (if applicable), to A/Prof Dominic Howarth or Marilyn Wilckens for processing and forwarding to RHD Unit.

## General Guidelines

### Problem Summary

- Has the problem changed?
- How relevant is its importance?
- What has been done previously?
- What has the candidate contributed to date?
- What is the value of this contribution?

### Objective

A short statement stating the achievable objectives of the thesis - this is the most important element in the thesis proposal. If the objectives are not clearly written and achievable, the thesis usually ends badly.

### Literature Review

The candidate is required to critically review previous work in their chosen field. This means synthesis of the data ie comparison with other work and theory done on the same basis. This would include:

- How your work compares with the previous work?
- What is the accuracy and reliability of the previous work?
- What are the limitations of the previous work?
- Where does the existing knowledge lead you?
- What is missing?

- What are you going to provide?

## **Approach**

You will need to provide a detailed discussion of how you intend to accomplish your objective:

- theory necessary to interpret the results
- experiments necessary to obtain your results
- assessment of the accuracy and reliability of your results
- description of the analytical work, analyses and interpretation of the results.

## **Work Plan**

- An overall plan giving a block diagram illustrating activities and outcomes – this plan needs to document the planned experiments.

## **Schedule**

The schedule has two parts:

- A short description of tasks.
- Chart of the task schedule eg Gantt chart (if applicable)

## **Research Training Development Plan and Progress**

- list completed coursework, workshops, etc.
- updated planned progression of professional development

## **Contribution to sustainable development practice in the minerals industry**

Please read the following material (you are not limited to this material) and then write a short paragraph **{Draft statement of sustainability outcomes/contribution}** to explain how your research will contribute to sustainable development practice in the minerals industry.

SMI's Research in Relation to the ICMM Principles.

<http://www.smi.uq.edu.au/docs/icmmprin.pdf>

ICMM Principles

<http://www.icmm.com/our-work/sustainable-development-framework/10-principles>