

Guide to Confirmation of Candidature

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Graduate Research School
V2

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1. Overview of Confirmation of Candidature

This confirmation of candidature document is intended for use by candidates enrolled on or after 1st Feb 2025.

Confirmation of Candidature (CofC) is a formal milestone that must be attempted by candidates for the Higher Degrees by Research - Masters by Research and Doctor of Philosophy.

Prior to confirmation of candidature, an HDR candidate is considered *probationary*.

For candidature to be confirmed, the candidate must demonstrate:

- a viable research program has been developed.
- satisfactory progress has been made, and
- the degree requirements can be completed within the approved candidature period.

Confirmation of Candidature is also an opportunity to check that the candidate and supervisors are working well as a team.

The approved candidature period for the Doctor of Philosophy is three years full-time or part-time equivalent, and for Masters by Research, 1.5 years full-time or part-time equivalent.

The process and requirements for Confirmation of Candidature are mandated in the [HDR Candidate Procedure](#) and [HDR Candidate Guidelines](#). The information included in this guide expands on these documents.

1.1 Timing of the Confirmation of Candidature milestone

Confirmation of Candidature **must be completed** before:

- 6 months of candidature or part-time equivalent for Master by Research candidates
- 9 months of candidature or part-time equivalent for PhD candidates.

Probationary PhD candidates should aim to attempt confirmation three months prior to the actual deadline (6 months from initial enrolment) to allow for any revisions or amendments to the research project and the CofC document before the 9-month (or part-time equivalent) deadline.

1.2 Converting to PhD candidature from the Masters by Research

Masters by research candidates requesting to convert to PhD candidature must:

- submit an Intention to Confirm form citing the request to upgrade to PhD candidature **at or before six months** from initial enrolment.
- have the support of their Principal Supervisor and [relevant HDR Coordinator](#).
- follow the requirements for PhD confirmation of candidature, and
- complete the confirmation process **by 9 months** or part-time equivalent from initial enrolment.

2. Requirements before attempting Confirmation of Candidature

2.1 Skills Development Program

Masters by Research and PhD candidates must complete a required number of core and optional sessions from the Federation University HDR Skills Development Program (SDP) before attempting Confirmation. Details of these requirements are provided in the full program available on the [SDP webpage](#).

2.2 Research integrity

All candidates should familiarise themselves with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) when planning their research project. This should be achieved by completing the online Research Integrity module which forms part of the SDP pre-confirmation requirements.

3. Internship and industry involvement during candidature

Federation University encourages candidates to engage with industry or complete an internship during their candidature and this should be planned before Confirmation of Candidature. Discuss this with your supervisory team.

4. Confirmation of candidature process

Candidates must complete and submit the [Intention to Confirm Candidature form](#) to the Graduate Research School at research.degrees@federation.edu.au at least four weeks prior to the proposed date of their CofC seminar.

The purpose of the Intention to Confirm Candidature form is to provide the date of the seminar, confirm whether the Skills Development Program and other requirements are fulfilled and provide nominations for the panel involved in assessing the Confirmation of Candidature milestone.

The full process for confirmation is outlined in Appendix 1 Confirmation of candidature steps.

Once an approved Intention to Confirm form is received, the Graduate Research School creates a calendar invitation to the candidate, panel members and supervisory team in Microsoft Outlook's TEAMS. This invitation can be forwarded to other interested participants. The seminar link will be included on the [Upcoming confirmations of candidature](#) webpage available to Federation staff and students.

5. Application for extension to the probationary term

Should the candidate and their supervisory team identify that an extension to the due date of confirmation is required, they should formally apply for an extension using the [Request to Defer CofC form](#) accompanied by a candidature completion plan to the [Graduate Research School](#).

The candidature [completion plan](#), developed by the candidate and Principal Supervisor must demonstrate how the project will be completed in a timely manner despite the delay in confirmation. The Request to Defer and completion plan is to be endorsed by the relevant [HDR Coordinator](#).

Challenges incurred by the candidate within the probationary period that have necessitated the delay should also be documented in the Annual/Interim progress report.

6. Learning Access Plans, reasonable adjustments and support during CofC

Any candidates requiring assistance to access reasonable adjustments or a Learning Access Plan should contact [Accessibility Services](#) who work in collaboration with candidates to tailor service provision to their individual needs.

Where a candidate has reasonable adjustments or a Learning Access Plan in place, they are encouraged to share it with their supervisor, particularly where it will benefit their candidature.

Where a plan has been shared with the supervisor or supervisory team, it should be considered in the completion of the confirmation of candidature milestone. Suggested adjustments made to the Confirmation of Candidature process and / or documents must be approved by the Dean, Graduate Research.

7. Composition of the panel

The membership of the confirmation of candidature panel must reflect the roles described below. The candidate's supervisory team normally recommends appropriate disciplinary experts and additional panel members, in consultation with the HDR Coordinator where necessary. The same panel members should be invited to participate in assessment of each of the candidate's major milestones, where possible.

The panel should comprise of:

- the relevant HDR Coordinator or nominee (Chair)
- the Principal Supervisor
- two discipline experts with relevant PhD qualifications
 - for PhD confirmations, one must be external to Federation University

Additional members may include:

- An industry partner, where appropriate
- An Indigenous community member, where appropriate.

At least one panel member, other than the chair, should be an experienced HDR supervisor. This requirement may be met by an existing panel member or appointing an additional panel member.

The Principal Supervisor and Panel Chair should ensure that no major conflicts of interest exist between panel members and the candidate, or between panel members and the supervisory team. Where minor conflicts of interest exist, these should be disclosed and managed. The [ACGR Guidelines for disclosing and managing conflicts](#) is a useful document to help consider this.

8. Preparing the written report

The body of the written report for the Confirmation of Candidature should be prepared in according to the following upper word limits:

- 4,000 - 7,000 words for Masters by Research candidates
- 5,000 - 10,000 words for PhD candidates

The word limits for the Confirmation of Candidature written report include the main text, explanatory footnotes and captions and exclude references. Appendices (including a 'Turnitin' report, if attached to the CofC report as an appendix) will not be included in the word count.

Significantly longer reports may be returned to the candidate for review and prompt resubmission to avoid rescheduling the CofC seminar.

The written report must be submitted to the Graduate Research School for distribution to the panel at least **two weeks prior** to the date set for the CofC seminar.

If the written report contains confidential material, the candidate and supervisors should seek advice from the HDRC as to whether a closed panel review should be arranged.

Where candidates use Artificial Intelligence in the creation of the CofC document, including for editing, candidates should include information on their use of Artificial Intelligence as outlined in the [University's Artificial Intelligence Guidelines](#) and the Graduate Research School's [Guidelines for HDR candidates on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence \(Gen AI\) tools](#).

8.1 Elements of a Confirmation of Candidature written report

The following is a list of elements you may need to include in your written report, depending on the research project and the requirements of your research discipline. Inclusion and content of any of these sections must be discussed between the candidate and the supervisory team.

- Cover page
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations and/or glossary
- **Background to the research**
 - Introduction
 - Literature review
 - Significance and purpose of the research
- **Research approach and methods**
 - Methodology
 - Methods
- **Research ethics and integrity**
 - Research integrity
 - Indigenous cultural awareness
 - Use of generative artificial intelligence (gen AI)
 - Ethics
 - Data retention and management
 - Intellectual property
- **Project plan:**
 - Completion plan
 - Proposed budget
 - List of publications/creative works (created or intended)
- **Acknowledgement of support**
- **Reference list**
- **Appendix/Appendices**

Candidates may consider using a plagiarism detection program such as [Turnitin](#) available through [Moodle](#) before submission to assist in establishing and maintaining academic integrity. The Turnitin report can be attached as an appendix item and will not be included in the word count.

The [Confirmation of Candidature template](#) is recommended to assist candidates to format and structure their CofC document.

9. Confirmation of Candidature seminar

9.1 Presentation and Q&A session

The CofC seminar comprises a spoken presentation by the candidate, plus a question-and-answer period. The duration of the presentation by the candidate is normally 20-30 minutes long for Masters and 25-30 minutes long for PhD candidates dependent on discipline and chosen research project followed by time for questions and answers (Q&A).

Confirmation of candidature seminars are normally open for University community members to attend. Students, supervisors and HDR Coordinators are encouraged to invite interested people by forwarding the confirmation meeting request. Audience members may include members of the supervisory team (other than the Principal Supervisor, who is a panel member), representatives from relevant industries or communities, academics, and peers from across the University.

9.2 TEAMS and the online presentation

Confirmation of Candidature seminars are usually presented online via TEAMS and organised by the Graduate Research School. In-person seminars can be organised in consultation with the Graduate Research School.

To avoid issues with the presentation, candidates must log in using their student email address.

Recording of the Confirmation of Candidature TEAMS meeting

Recordings of the CofC panel can be made by request in advance. The Panel Chair is responsible for recording sessions where required. Please note, only the seminar (including the question-and-answer period of the seminar) may be recorded in this manner. It is not appropriate to record panel deliberations.

10. Preparing for the seminar

The supervisory team should assist the candidate to plan and prepare for the CofC seminar. Preparations may include, as appropriate:

- development of a PowerPoint presentation or other visual aids for a logical flow for the seminar
- clear articulation of the context and purpose of the research, which will normally require reference to the existing body of literature.
- an explanation of the significance of the research
- an explanation and justification of the chosen research approach and methodology
- detail regarding the research methods
- communication of progress to date and work remaining
- an indication of the next steps for this research
- consideration of likely questions (and appropriate answers to these).

Several rehearsals prior to the scheduled presentation date are recommended to check timing and flow. Where possible, rehearsals are best made in front of a critical but supportive audience such as supervisors and other HDR candidates and should include a rehearsal of the question-and-answer session.

During the question-and-answer session, members of the CofC panel, and other audience members will ask questions of the candidate. The candidate should respond based on their knowledge of the project to date.

10.1 Panel interview with candidate

Following the CofC seminar, the panel will discuss aspects of the seminar, the written report and the candidate's progress to date with the candidate. This is an opportunity to raise and resolve issues and to clarify any misunderstandings.

11. Panel recommendations

The panel is obliged to make a recommendation regarding the outcome of the confirmation of candidature attempt within 5 days of the seminar. The panel may recommend any of the following outcomes:

- Confirmed
- Confirmed subject to conditions, candidate must meet conditions within eight weeks to be confirmed.
- Confirmation deferred - the candidate will be required to attempt confirmation again within 12 weeks or part-time equivalent or
- Not confirmed. The candidate will be required to 'show cause' as to why candidature should not be terminated.

12. Process of second confirmation attempt

Where the outcome of the confirmation of candidature is deferred, the candidate is given an opportunity to revise their work for reconsideration by the panel. This may involve amending the written report and/or the seminar based on feedback from the CofC panel within 12 weeks (or 24 weeks part-time candidature).

Where possible, the confirmation panel members should be the same as at the first confirmation attempt. The supervisory team will provide reasonable assistance to support the candidate to prepare for the second confirmation attempt. The candidate must carefully address the comments made by the CofC panel during the first attempt. Candidates are not usually offered a third opportunity to confirm their candidature.

Full details of the confirmation requirements and process are provided in the [HDR Candidate Procedure](#) and [HDR Candidate Guidelines](#).

13. Other outcomes

13.1 Transfer to Masters by Research after unsuccessful PhD confirmation attempt.

At the time of confirmation, a candidate who is not successful in confirming as a PhD candidate, may, with the recommendation of the confirmation panel, and provided they meet the requirements, transfer their candidature to a Masters by Research. For further details, refer to section 6.11 *Conversion from a Masters by Research to a PhD course* in the [HDR Candidature Procedure](#).

13.2 Show Cause

Show cause is a shortened term for 'the candidate must show cause as to why they should not be excluded from the University'.

Show cause is a formal process facilitated by the Graduate Research School, under various circumstances, including following an unsuccessful confirmation of candidature. The candidate must present a case to a panel as to why their candidature should not be terminated. Refer to the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#) for further details.

14. The role of the supervisory team

The Principal Supervisor, having consulted with other members of the supervisory team, will nominate panel members for approval by the HDR Coordinator. Requirements for panel members are outlined in section 15.

The Principal Supervisor is a member of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel. Associate and Co-supervisors are an integral part of the candidate's support team and audience and are invited to observe the discussions with the panel after the CofC seminar, however they are not formally involved in the panel deliberations resulting in the CofC outcome.

Supervisors are expected to:

- ensure that the candidate attends the prescribed Skills Development Program (SDP) sessions, so that the probationary candidate is eligible to undertake CofC.
- guide the probationary candidate through the candidature requirements outlined in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).
- meet with the candidate in the early months of enrolment to discuss the CofC milestone and associated timelines.
- observe the candidate's progress and identify and address any issues constraining their progress or preparations for CofC.
- work with panel members and the Graduate Research School to set a date for the CofC seminar which allows attendance by all panel members unless other arrangements have been made. Where an agreed date cannot be found, panel membership may need to be revised.
- mentor the probationary candidate to ensure readiness, knowledge, and capacity to undertake the CofC process within the required timelines, so as not to jeopardise the continuation of their candidature and/or scholarship (where awarded).
- mentor the probationary candidate regarding the critical importance of research ethics and integrity in research, including issues relating to authorship and Intellectual Property. Ensure that relevant ethics approvals have been sought and approved, or that appropriate progress has been made towards this, and that this information is included in the written and CofC seminar for CofC.
- provide the probationary candidate with timely feedback during preparation of both the written report and CofC seminar for CofC

Supervisors must support the candidate to understand the outcome of the CofC process, particularly where the outcome is *Confirmed subject to conditions*, *Confirmation deferred*, or *Not confirmed*.

Where the panel recommendation is *Confirmed subject to conditions*, supervisors are to assist the candidate to meet the conditions outlined in the panel report within the time set by the CofC panel.

Where the outcome is *Not confirmed*, supervisors are expected to provide mentoring and support to the probationary candidate through the process of Withdrawal from Candidature or the 'Show Cause' procedure as detailed in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).

15. The role of the Confirmation Panel

The role of the Confirmation Panel is to determine whether the candidate has completed such processes as determined by the Academic Board to demonstrate that a viable research program has been developed, satisfactory progress has been made, and that the degree requirements can be completed within the period allowed. Please see Section 2. [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).

The panel will review the candidate's written report to ensure that the purpose, significance, scope, methodology and methods are clearly articulated and appropriate for the project. The study design and proposed methods must be in accord with discipline conventions, and the project must be designed within the scope of the resources available to support its execution within the given time frame for the program. The report should provide evidence of sufficient progress to date so that the panel is confident that the candidate will complete their research project prior to the end of their candidature period.

The panel will evaluate the candidate's seminar, considering whether the candidate demonstrates a sound understanding of the research topic, both during the presentation and in the verbal defence of their research during questioning.

The panel via the Chair's report will provide written feedback to the candidate, summarising their view of the candidate's likely capacity to progress their research efficiently to its conclusion within the designated minimum timeframe of their program.

Formal and informal feedback to the candidate should include congratulatory statements where warranted.

Between the seminar and completion of the Chair's report, the Chair should meet with the candidate to explore any concerns regarding the candidate's research and the likelihood of timely completion. This should include a discussion about the supervisory relationship. Verbal feedback about the outcome of the Confirmation process may be provided during this meeting.

The Chair's report is to be submitted to the Graduate Research School within 4 days of the seminar date, so the candidate record may be updated, and the candidate formally advised of the outcome within 5 business days of their CofC seminar.

In the case of a second confirmation attempt, the confirmation panel will have documented all aspects of the candidate's work considered inadequate in the first confirmation attempt, and this report will be shared with the candidate and supervisory team. The confirmation panel will also have advised the candidate of the possible consequences of an unsuccessful second confirmation attempt.

15.1 Suggested agenda for the CofC seminar and panel meeting

A suggested agenda for the CofC seminar is as follows:

- Supervisor introduces the candidate.
- Candidate presents.
- Questions from the floor (chaired by supervisor or panel chair)
- Informal proceedings end - Audience leaves

A suggested agenda for the CofC panel meeting is as follows:

- Panel convenes (usually directly following the seminar) to discuss the CofC outcome.
- Candidate is asked to leave the (virtual or actual) meeting room while the panel discusses the written report and the presentation. This discussion should include an opportunity for the Principal Supervisor to comment on the candidate's progress to date, the suitability of the project design and the likelihood of timely completion; and raise any special circumstances relevant to the candidate or the project.
- The panel may formulate an agreed tentative outcome before inviting the candidate to return to the meeting room.

- The candidate is invited to join the panel. At this point, the Supervisor(s) may be asked to leave the (virtual or actual) meeting room while the remainder of the panel meets with the candidate.
 - Discussion with the candidate should include an opportunity for the candidates to comment on their progress to date, the suitability of the project and the likelihood of timely completion; and raise any special circumstances.
 - The panel should specifically ask the candidate to comment on the adequacy and appropriateness of the supervisory (and other) support provided by the University.
 - If they have left, the supervisors should be invited to return to the meeting room.
- If the tentative agreed outcome remains unchanged following discussions with the candidate, the chair should inform the candidate verbally of the outcome and any subsequent consequences.
- If the panel requires further discussion before finally deciding an outcome, these deliberations may take place in the presence of the candidate at the discretion of the chair. If the candidate is asked to leave, they should return to be verbally informed of the final outcome.
- Chair completes Panel Report Form on behalf of the CofC panel.
- Chair may choose to meet independently with the Candidate before finalising the Panel Report Form
- Chair finalises and forwards panel report to the Graduate Research School to update the candidate's record and the Graduate Research School formally notifies the candidate of the CofC outcome.

15.2 Panel assessment

The CofC panel must assess the confirmation document and seminar against questions and statements in the panel report template. The categories can be found on the [Panel Report Confirmation of Candidature](#) document in the 'Assessment of candidature' section.

15.3 Key information to be communicated by the panel

The panel is required to provide feedback to the candidate regarding all points detailed in the panel report document above. The CofC panel report form guides the panel in this respect.

Feedback to the candidate should include advice on areas that need to be strengthened and congratulatory feedback where appropriate.

16. Useful links

16.2 Federation University Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

[HDR Candidature Procedure](#)

[HDR Candidature Guidelines](#)

[HDR Scholarship Guidelines](#)

[HDR Forms](#)

[Library resources](#)

[University Academic Board](#)

16.3 Government Legislation

[Higher Education Standards \(Thresholds Framework\) 2015 4.2:1C](#)

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

16.4 Ethics

[National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023](#)

[Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)

[Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#)

[Office of the Gene Technology Regulator](#)

Appendix 1 – Confirmation of candidature steps

	Activity	Responsibility	Steps
1	Probationary candidate participates in mandatory SDP sessions, completing any required activities	Probationary candidate	Probationary candidate completes the SDP sessions.
1.5	Candidate and supervisor discuss the possibility of an internship	Probationary candidate and supervisor	Refer to the GRS SharePoint page to seek relevant information on internships and industry connections.
2	Notification of Intention to Confirm	Probationary candidate	Candidate submits Notification of Intention Confirm form to supervisor for approval to undergo confirmation at least four weeks prior to confirmation date.
4	Submission of written proposal	Probationary candidate	The candidate submits a written research proposal, prepared in accordance with CofC guidelines, to Graduate Research School (GRS) two weeks prior to the seminar date.
5	Confirmation seminar and panel review takes place	Probationary candidate, Confirmation Panel Supervisory team	The Probationary candidate makes an CofC seminar accordance with CofC Guidelines. The candidate responds to questions on their research from the Panel and audience at the conclusion of the seminar. Panel members, not able to physically attend the seminar, may dial in to the seminar and /or provide feedback on the Candidate's written report, to the Panel Chair, prior to the seminar date.
6	Panel provides feedback to the candidate / probationary candidate	Panel Chair – Graduate Research School	In all outcomes the Panel will provide a written report to the candidate via GRS within five days of the presentation, outlining the reasons for its decision.
	Outcome: Confirmed	GRS	GRS forwards panel report to the candidate, advising of outcome.
	Outcome: Confirmed subject to conditions	Candidate	1. Where the recommendation is that candidature be confirmed 'Subject to conditions' the report will include details of what tasks will need to be completed with associated timelines, to confirm candidature. 2. The candidate will be provided with up to eight weeks to meet the conditions.

			<p>3. The candidate must provide evidence that the conditions have been met to the Confirmation Panel.</p> <p>4. The Confirmation Panel must advise the GRS that the conditions have been met within five days of approving the Candidate for candidature.</p>
	<p>Outcome: Confirmation deferred</p>	<p>Candidate Supervisory team CofC Panel</p>	<p>1. Where the recommendation is that 'Confirmation is deferred' the report will include details of what tasks will need to be completed with associated timelines.</p> <p>2. The candidate will be provided with up to twelve weeks to revise the seminar and/or written submission.</p> <p>3. The candidate must recommence the confirmation process with only one of the following outcomes to be recommended: Confirmed Not confirmed</p>
	<p>Outcome: Not Confirmed</p>	<p>Confirmation Panel GRS</p>	<p>The Confirmation Panel provides confirmation report to GRS to commence Show Cause process. The report will include justification as to why the candidate has not been confirmed.</p> <p>The panel must advise the probationary candidate that the outcome is 'not confirmed'</p> <p>The GRS will advise the candidate of the 'Show Cause' procedure.</p>