

## School of Education Milestone Guidelines – MPhil and PhD

Milestones provide an important sequence of events in the candidature of a RHD student. They enable Candidates to provide evidence of and receive formal feedback on their progress. All Milestones require written, oral and interview components, as outlined by the UQ Graduate School and UQ Policies and Procedures ([PPL 4.60.05b](#)). The guidelines for the application of Milestone procedures within the School of Education are given below and on the following pages. The Advisory Team and the Panel should also consult the *Milestone Meeting Information: Outline of Contents and Timing* on the School Intranet for further details about the conduct and contents of the Milestone Meetings.

**Advisory Team.** Before Confirmation of Candidature can be attained, Candidates must have at least two academic advisors for the duration of their candidature.

**Attendance.** The Candidate, at least one Advisor and at least two Panel members (including a Chair) must attend the Milestone Meeting (via teleconference or videoconference, if needed).

**Milestone Panels.** Each Milestone involves a Panel of 2-3 independent academics (one of whom is selected as Chair), chosen by the Advisory Team, who provide external feedback to the student on his/her progress. The Panel consults with the Advisory Team to come to a decision about the Candidate's attainment or non-attainment of each Milestone (in consultation with the Postgraduate RHD Coordinator (PGC), if no consensus is reached). Further details of the Chair's role are given in the *Milestone Meeting Information* document on the School Intranet.

**Attainment or non-attainment of Milestone.** By the end of the interview, the Panel (in consultation with the Advisory Team) makes an assessment of the written, oral and interview components and reaches one of the following outcomes, subject to final approval by the PGC and Graduate School.

- *Attainment of Milestone.*
- *Conditional attainment of Milestone.* Attainment is subject to minor revisions or additional tasks to be completed within 2-4 weeks. The Milestone attainment form is submitted once the conditions are met.
- *Non-attainment of Milestone.* The Candidate submits an Extension of Milestone Request form to the Graduate School. If the extension is approved, The Candidate is expected to resubmit the written work to the Panel and a new interview is held within three months. For Confirmation, the oral component is generally not re-assessed (unless necessary and then only to the Panel and Advisory Team).

**Transferring between MPhil and PhD.** It is possible for a Candidate to apply for transfer between the MPhil and PhD programs, if it is determined that the Candidate is working above or below expectations. Evidence is required and transfer is subject to approval by the PGC and Graduate School.

- *From MPhil to PhD.* At a Milestone, a Candidate may apply to transfer from an MPhil to a PhD. This generally would occur at the Confirmation Milestone. The Panel needs to indicate in their feedback if they recommend transfer and if so, whether they recommend transfer to Provisional or Confirmed PhD status. Provisional status allows the Candidate to begin the PhD from the beginning, providing time to develop a PhD-quality study. A Provisional PhD Candidate then goes through the Confirmation Milestone according to the normal timeline using the "upgrade" date as their new commencement date. If the Candidate's Milestone is completed at the level of a PhD, the Panel may then recommend that they be transferred as a Confirmed PhD Candidate with the next Milestone due as deemed by the Graduate School.
- *From PhD to MPhil.* In unusual circumstances, if a Candidate is not making satisfactory progress in the PhD, they may apply for transfer to an MPhil for the remainder of their Candidature. Additional documentation of poor progress will likely be required and this process should be conducted with the assistance of the PGC.

## Milestone 1 – Confirmation of Candidature

Confirmation is a critically important moment for every Research Higher Degree Candidate. The Confirmation of Candidature Milestone is to be completed 12 months (PhD) or 6 months (MPhil) Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) after commencement. At this Milestone:

- the candidate receives formative advice about the direction, scope, planning, and feasibility of the project; and about the acquisition or further development of appropriate research and professional skills;
- the School/Institute reviews the human, physical, financial resources needed to sustain the Candidature, in compliance with relevant university, disciplinary, and external regulatory protocols; and;
- the university is assured by the School/Institute's review that continuation of the Candidature is likely to lead to an assessable thesis within the university's expected timeframe.

Written work	Format	Research problem, aim(s) of the study, literature review, methodology section detailing the research plan, timetable, budget
	Word limit	10 000 words (PhD); 6 000 words (MPhil)
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates critical insights into the research problem situated in the literature, appropriateness of methodological approach, and academic written skills
	Timing	Provided to Panel two weeks prior to interview
	Assessment	Written work is assessed by the Panel
Oral work	Format	Formal academic seminar presentation, open invitation to school community members and guests
	Duration	20 minutes + 10 minutes discussion
	Quality expectations	Communicates critical insights into the research problem, appropriateness of methodological approach, and academic verbal skills (including appropriate responses to questions)
	Timing	After submission of written work, immediately prior to interview
	Assessment	Oral work is assessed by the Panel
Interview	Format	Additional questions and dialogue about the project, oral feedback, issues during Candidature, advice for next Milestone, formal recommendation (attainment, conditional attainment, non-attainment). Discussion groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Panel, Advisory Team and Candidate</li> <li>- Panel and Advisory Team</li> <li>- Panel and Candidate</li> <li>- Panel alone (optional)</li> <li>- Panel, Advisory Team and Candidate for conclusion of verbal feedback and decision on attainment (to be summarised in written feedback)</li> </ul>
	Participants	Candidate, Advisory Team and Panel
	Duration	30 minutes
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates critical insights into the research problem and methodological approach, ability to respond to questions and advice
	Timing	After written and oral components are completed
	Assessment	Interview is assessed by the Panel.
Written Feedback	Format	Record of attainment, verbal feedback and recommendations given during interview. Provided by the Panel Chair within two weeks of interview.

## Milestone 2 – Mid-Candidature Review

The Mid-Candidature Review represents a mid-point between Confirmation of Candidature and Thesis Review Milestones. This Milestone is to be completed 12 months (PhD) or 6 months (MPhil) Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) after Confirmation. Achievement of this Milestone reassures the Candidate, Advisory Team and School/Institute that:

- the project is on track for completion within Candidature duration, and;
- the Candidate's research and other professional skills are developing appropriately.

Written work	Format	One of the following: draft thesis chapter, substantial piece of academic writing, article submitted for publication to a refereed journal or full conference paper, <u>plus</u> one page Progress Report (outlining challenges, career directions and aspirations, response to written feedback from previous Milestone and adjusted timeline)
	Word limit	12 000 words (PhD); 8 000 words (MPhil)
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates critical insights into the research problem, key educational debate to the problem and/or methodological issue, academic written communication skills and engagement with report from previous Milestone
	Timing	Provided to Panel two weeks prior to interview
	Assessment	Written work is assessed by the Panel
Oral work	Format	Presentation of Candidate's research to a scholarly audience, for example, academic conference, School Postgraduate Conference or School seminar presentation
	Duration	20 minutes + 10 minutes discussion, or as appropriate
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates critical insights into the research problem, key educational debate to the problem and/or methodological issue, and academic verbal communication skills (including appropriate responses to questions)
	Timing	Anytime between Confirmation of Candidature and Mid-Candidature Review Milestones
	Assessment	Evidence of completion is checked by the Committee, but not formally assessed
Interview	Format	Update on progress, questions and dialogue about the project, oral feedback, issues during Candidature, advice for next Milestone, formal recommendation (attainment, conditional attainment, non-attainment). Discussion groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Panel, Advisory Team and Candidate</li> <li>- Panel and Advisory Team</li> <li>- Panel and Candidate</li> <li>- Panel alone (optional)</li> <li>- Panel, Advisory Team and Candidate for conclusion of verbal feedback and decision on attainment (to be summarised in written feedback)</li> </ul>
	Participants	Candidate, Advisory Team and Panel
	Duration	30-45 minutes
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates critical insights into the research problem, methodological issue and/or key educational debate, ability to respond to questions and advice and engagement with feedback from previous Milestone
	Timing	After written and oral components are completed
	Assessment	Interview is assessed by the Panel
Written Feedback	Format	Record of attainment, verbal feedback and recommendations given during interview. Provided by the Panel Chair within two weeks of interview.

## Milestone 3 – Thesis Review

Thesis Review represents near completion of the Thesis and is to be completed 12 months (PhD) or 6 months (MPhil) Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) after Mid-Candidature Review and 3 months FTE before Thesis submission. The Thesis Review:

- enables the School/Institute to determine collectively that the Thesis should be ready for assessment by the expected date
- assures the Candidate and Advisory Team of the scope, originality and quality of the Thesis
- identifies any major concerns that need attention before submission
- provides a forum for discussing the mix of disciplinary knowledge required among the Thesis assessors to review the breadth of work contained within the Thesis, and
- enables the Candidate and the Advisors to express any reservations or concerns about having any particular individual act as an assessor.

Written work	Format	A completed <b>draft chapter</b> from late in the thesis (eg findings, discussion, analysis), one page <b>Progress Report</b> (outlining challenges, career directions and aspirations, response to written feedback from previous Milestone and final timeline) and <b>list of thesis chapters</b> (preferably with brief synopsis of each)
	Word limit	N/A
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates work of PhD/MPhil standard, as appropriate
	Timing	Provided to Panel two weeks prior to interview
	Assessment	Written work is assessed by the Panel
Oral work	Format	Formal or informal presentation to Panel that overviews the Thesis (the “thesis” of the Thesis, key findings and implications)
	Duration	5-10 minutes
	Quality expectations	Succinctly summarises the Thesis and demonstrates critical insights into the research problem
	Timing	At the beginning of meeting
	Assessment process	Oral work is assessed by the Panel
Interview	Format	Update on progress, questions and dialogue about the project and Thesis submission and examination process, oral feedback, issues during Candidature, formal recommendation (attainment, conditional attainment, non-attainment). Discussion groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Panel, Advisory Team and Candidate</li> <li>- Panel and Advisory Team</li> <li>- Panel and Candidate</li> <li>- Panel alone (optional)</li> <li>- Panel, Advisory Team and Candidate for conclusion of verbal feedback and decision on attainment (to be summarised in written feedback)</li> </ul>
	Participants	Candidate, Advisory Team and Panel
	Duration	30-45 minutes
	Quality expectations	Demonstrates critical insights into the research problem, methodological issue and/or key educational debate, ability to respond to questions and advice and engagement with feedback from previous Milestone
	Timing	After written and oral components completed
	Assessment	Interview is assessed by the Panel
Written Feedback	Format	Record of attainment, verbal feedback and recommendations given during interview. Provided by the Panel Chair within two weeks of interview. In addition to matters normally covered by feedback and recommendation documents, the Thesis Review feedback attests to the quality and scope of the research, details any decisions that may have been reached about the mix of thesis assessors and notes the expected Thesis submission date.