



Faculty of Business

Confirmation Document

**Research Support Office
Queensland University of Technology**

1. Background

A candidate for the degree of PhD is required to complete successfully a planned research program that will result in the candidate making a significant individual contribution to the body of knowledge. This contribution may be in the form of new knowledge or of significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge.

Time Line

Within twelve months of admission for full-time candidates and twenty four months for part-time candidates, eighteen months for international candidates, the candidate shall present (in consultation with her/his supervisors) a plan of the research program for the remainder of the candidature and a report on the work done to this point.

Candidate Responsibility

A candidate who is not able to complete Confirmation of Candidature within the timeframe listed must apply for an extension at least one month in advance of that deadline through the Faculty to the Research Degrees Committee.

The confirmation report shall incorporate a substantial literature review and shall provide evidence of the research capacity of the candidate including the rate of progress to this point.

The candidate shall present the confirmation report and planned research program at a Confirmation of Candidature Seminar open to Faculty members and the public.

The candidate should advise the Research Studies Officer one month in advance of the proposed seminar. It is the candidate's responsibility to provide the confirmation report two weeks prior to the seminar.

Supervisory Panel

A Supervisory Panel comprised of:

- Chairperson – a senior researcher in the field or related field (who is an experienced supervisor and not the principal or associate supervisor);
- Principal Supervisor;
- Faculty representative – interdisciplinary (nominated by the Chair of the Faculty Research and Development Committee);
- Associate Supervisor;
- Where appropriate an additional fifth member may be appointed who is a suitably qualified academic, industry partner or external expert in the field of research.

will assess the seminar.

The length of the seminar is a 40-minute presentation from the candidate and 20 minutes questions from the panel and the audience. The panel may request the candidate remain for further questions. At the conclusion of the presentation the panel will meet to deliberate on approving the confirmation of candidature into the PhD program in the Faculty of Business.

The Review panel will advise the student of the decision at the conclusion of the panel discussion, and in turn make a recommendation to the University's Research Degrees Committee of their recommendations.

University Process

Following advice from the Faculty, the University's Research Degrees Committee may confirm a student's candidature or extend provisional candidature for between three to six months, or it may terminate the candidature if justified. If a student's candidature is terminated, they will be given an opportunity to show cause why such action should not be taken. Students not permitted to proceed with the PhD may be offered entry into a masters program.

2. The Confirmation of Candidature Process

The Formal Confirmation of Candidature report should be submitted 14 days prior to the Confirmation Seminar to the Research Studies Officer. The document should include:

- A written report on progress to date, including an outline of the full course of study, and details of coursework completed and grades obtained;
- A statement by either the Head of School or the Research Coordinator that the proposed thesis studies are consistent with the aims of the resources of the School;
- A summary of the research proposal which will be forwarded to the University.

A seminar presentation as part of an oral defence of the proposed thesis research project which will be assessed by a Supervisory Panel.

Following receipt of the student's report and the Review Panel's recommendations, the Faculty Research and Development Committee may recommend or request changes to the coursework program or research thesis project. Once any changes have been satisfactorily made, a recommendation will be forwarded to the University Research Degrees Committee.

Further information about the candidature process can be obtained from the Faculty Research Studies Officer.

3. Research Proposal

The proposal should be structured using a structure similar to the final thesis. Each section should cover the essential elements that would typically be found in a thesis, (recognising many elements would be covered in a sketchy or preliminary way at this stage):

Introduction – The introduction needs to state the objectives of the program, include definitions of the key concepts and variables and a brief outline of the background, models and research approach.

Literature Review – It is expected that this section will be a succinct version of the literature review chapter of the thesis. The literature search should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the area and can provide arguments to support the study focus.

Research Question – This section requires an explicit statement of the hypotheses, propositions, or research question and how they are derived from existing theory and literature. The section should also demonstrate the contribution of the research to the field, and be stated in a way that that leads to the methodology.

The adequacy of the introduction, literature review and research question will be judged on the following criteria:

- The thoroughness of the literature review. Is it of the coverage of an essentially completed thesis?
- The clarity of the relationship between the literature review and the research question
- The theoretical and practical implications of the research. A PhD cannot be primarily a practical or consulting question such as “Is this leadership program effective?” The question asked, if supported, must have significant implications for existing academic theory.

Methods – The methods section will include a clear statement of methods including:

- Measures and/or data to be collected;
- Sample type and size;
- Procedures;
- Timetable;
- “Critical paths” in multi-study programs; and
- A discussion of potential problems, and ethical clearance issues.

The adequacy of the methods section will be judged on:

- The appropriateness of the methods for answering the research question. The methods must link explicitly to the research question. The methods must also be suited to the nature of the question. For example, a thoroughly researched field, in which a new variable is being examined, would rarely be suited to exploratory, theory building methods. Conversely, very complex new areas would not be suited to general quantitative approaches.
- The quality of the approach. For example, are scales reliable and valid? In qualitative research, how are the validity, reliability and generalisability issues to be handled?
- The detail of presentation. Is there enough detail for the reader to replicate the study. For example “Additional data will be used for triangulation” is inadequate. Rather “HR exit interviews, turnover data and CEO memos will be coded” would be adequate. Similarly, “A survey will be conducted” would not be adequate. Rather, specific items and scales, along with a sample selection strategy should be presented.

Analysis

The analysis section needs to link the analysis of the research to the methods, and needs to be precise enough so that the reader can replicate the research. For qualitative research, justification needs to be provided for methods such as coding and dealing with divergent data. For quantitative research, justification of the choice of statistics and the expected results that they will provide should be described.

The adequacy of the analysis section will be judged on:

- The appropriateness of the analysis approach for the data that is to be collected. It is important that the student demonstrates they have thought through the relationship between methods and analysis.
- The quality of the analysis. The student should demonstrate why this is the best approach to analysis.
- The detail of the presentation. There must be enough detail for the reader to replicate the analysis. For example, “NUD*IST or SPSS would be used” is not adequate. Rather the approach to coding, including how categories would be derived and validated, how the data would be structured, and specific analytical techniques applied, should be included.

Discussion – This is the concluding section of the report and should include information on implications and limitations of the research, any anticipated threats to the validity of the results, and a summary.

The adequacy of the discussion section will be judged on:

- Demonstrating a clear understanding of the limitations of the study.
- Presentation of a complete, but not overstated, set of implications for theory and practice.

Time-line for Completion of Research Program

- Outline the full-course of study
- Details of the Coursework completed and grades achieved.
- A statement on the nature of participation by the candidate in scholarly activities associated with the research group/School/ or Faculty in which the study is being undertaken.

The length of the proposal will be approximately 30 pages in length not including bibliography/reference list and appendices.