

RHD Milestones in the School of Veterinary Science

Overview

The University's milestone process ensures that RHD candidates keep on track and have access to feedback and guidance throughout their degree. The Milestone Policy is a three stage process designed to enable candidates to articulate their research to their colleagues and peers and successfully complete their studies within 3 to 4 years (PhD) or 1 to 2 years (MPhil). Each milestone is scheduled at equal points throughout their program.

Milestone Confirmation	MPhil 6 months	PhD 12 months
This is candidate's opportunity to explain their research project to their peers. At the end of the confirmation process candidates should be comfortable with the robustness and viability of their research project. Academic colleagues will provide candidates with valuable feedback on how to improve their research questions and proposed methodology. They will also have a clear path to follow towards Mid-Candidature Review.		
Milestone Mid-Candidature Review	MPhil 12 months	PhD 24 months
After completing the majority of their research candidates should be in a position to undergo the Mid-Candidature Review. At this milestone candidates should receive comment on their progress to date, the rigour of their research methodology and suggestions for any final experiments or data collection activities. Candidates will discuss with their academic colleagues what they need to do to make the journey to Thesis Review.		
Milestone Thesis Review	MPhil 18 months	PhD 36 months
This milestone will give candidates the opportunity to answer this question. By this stage candidates should have the majority of their thesis written. Candidate's peers will be available to provide them with direction and guidance in the final stages of their project. Comment will be made on the content and structure of their thesis. Candidates will receive suggestions on how to make it ready for submission.		

Turn-it-in Originality Report

Candidates are urged to run their milestone documents through the Turn-it-in software to generate an Originality Report for self-review and possible discussion with their advisory team prior to their milestones. All candidates should have access to a Blackboard community site titled "RHD Veterinary Science 2016" in Blackboard (<https://learn.uq.edu.au>). Candidates must log in to Blackboard with their student user name to view this site and submit their milestone document to Turn-it-in via this Blackboard site. Turn-it-in submission links are found under the Assessment tab. For further instructions on the submission process and how to view your Originality Report, please visit the UQ Library website (<https://www.library.uq.edu.au/ask-it/turnitin-assignments>) or contact the PGO for further assistance.

Confirmation of Candidature Milestone

Confirmation of candidature should be conducted within 9-12 months (PhD) or 4-6 months (MPhil) of enrolment. Confirmations are usually held on Wednesday's and Friday's commencing with seminars between 12pm 2 pm. The candidate liaises with the Postgraduate Administration Officer (Annette Winter: a.winter3@uq.edu.au) in the School to find out available dates.

The candidate's advisors nominate an internal (within the School of Veterinary Science) and an external expert to sit on the candidate's confirmation panel. The Postgraduate Coordinator nominates the chair of the panel. Advisors are required to contact these internal and external experts to ensure that they are available on the selected date. The Principal Advisor should then inform the Postgraduate Administration Officer (Annette Winter: a.winter3@uq.edu.au) of the names and email addresses of their two nominees.

The candidate receives advice about the direction, scope and feasibility of their research project; and the panel reviews the resources that are needed to sustain the candidature (the advisory team, technical support, physical and financial resources). The aim is to ensure that candidature is completed in a timely manner with a thesis that has a strong chance of having a successful outcome at examination.

1. Written material

This should be submitted, together with a brief abstract describing the project for use in advertising the seminar, two weeks prior to the confirmation date to the Postgraduate Administration Officer.

Candidates are expected to attend the institutional seminars of other research higher degree candidates, staff or visiting scientists within the School wherever possible or alternatively at the institution or site where they are based. To that end, candidates should indicate, on their milestone report, that they have attended at least 6 such seminars during their provisional candidature.

There are three sections in the document:

a) *Cover Page* – Include your name, student number, degree, thesis topic, milestone being reviewed and statement certifying that you have attended the 6 institutional seminars during your provisional candidature.

b) *Section 1: A sample of your literature review.*

This should introduce the reader to the topic and indicate why the project is necessary. The review does not need to be a review of the full topic as it will appear in the thesis – one or two sections of the final review is sufficient. The review should not exceed 15 pages.

c) *Section 2: Thesis proposal and plan of research*

This section contains the hypotheses or clear research questions, aims/objectives, methods, and a timeline for completion of the thesis. The methodology should be appropriate and contain sufficient detail of to enable panel members to understand the way in which the work would be undertaken. The work should be achievable in the required time-frame.

d) *Section 3: Requirements*

This section contains a comprehensive consideration of the skills, support, equipment and finances required for the completion of the research project including:

- relevant skills and techniques already gained via prior training or experience, induction programs, workshops, training from the candidate's advisory team, etc
- further skills and techniques required to fulfil the objectives of the candidate's research
- technical assistance
- financial assistance

- equipment or facilities (including satisfactory work-space)
- professional development skills needed for the candidate's medium-term career aspirations

2. Seminar

The candidate is required to make a formal oral presentation on their research project to the School. The seminar should be no more than 20 minutes duration, followed by 5-10 minutes for questions. In the presentation candidates should cover the background to their topic, the hypotheses or research questions, the research aims/objectives, any results that they have obtained, and the conclusions and future directions of their work.

3. Interview

An interview session is conducted by the confirmation panel directly after the seminar. The panel consists of a chair (appointed by the School's Postgraduate Coordinator) and an internal and external expert (who are both nominated by the candidate's advisors). The usual format of the interview session is for the advisors to be interviewed first, followed by the candidate. Feedback will be provided to all parties at the end of the session.

At the conclusion of the interview session, an assessment report is prepared by the chair of the confirmation panel.

Mid-Candidature Review Milestone

The Mid-Candidature Review milestone should be conducted within 24 months (PhD) or 12 months (MPhil) of enrolment.

1. Submission of Written Material

This should be submitted, together with a brief abstract describing the project for use in advertising the seminar, two weeks prior to the Mid-Candidature Review milestone date to the Postgraduate Administration Officer.

Candidates are expected to attend the institutional seminars of other research higher degree candidates, staff or visiting scientists within the School wherever possible or alternatively at the institution or site where they are based. To that end, candidates should indicate, on their milestone report, that they have attended at least 6 such seminars since their confirmation of candidature.

There are five sections in the document plus a cover page:

- a) Cover Page – Include your name, student number, degree, thesis topic, milestone being reviewed and statement certifying that you have attended the 6 institutional seminars since your confirmation of candidature.
- b) The original research plan including the timetable (from confirmation).
- c) Progress report including technical progress, any results to date and any problems.
- d) If substantial changes to the research plan have been made, a revised plan and timeline with a justification for any changes.
- e) A draft outline of your thesis, with chapter headings or titles of papers
- f) A sample (minimum 2 pages) of scientific writing which may be based on methods, results, discussion as normally found in a scientific paper.

This written material **should not exceed 5 pages (excluding cover page (item a) and sample of scientific writing (item f))**.

2. Oral presentation, which consists of:

The candidate gives a 10-15 minute presentation to the School.

3. An interview with a mid-candidature milestone panel

A panel will speak with the candidate and their advisors. This panel may include members from the candidate's original confirmation panel or other members from the School. The interview provides an opportunity to:

- ensure the candidate is making satisfactory progress with their candidature
- assess the candidate's ability to communicate the research project methods/outcomes
- assess the quality of the academic writing in the sample paper,
- assess the candidate's writing skills relating to synthesis, interpretation as evidenced in the sample paper.

Thesis Review Milestone

The Thesis Review milestone should be conducted within 36 months (PhD) or 18 months (MPhil) of enrolment.

The thesis review milestone occurs approximately 3 months full-time equivalent before the expected submission date of the thesis. Success at this milestone demonstrates the completion of the research project and readiness to finish the thesis writing and to submit the thesis for assessment. It will also enable the Thesis Review Panel, the candidate and the Advisory Team to discuss possible examiners of the thesis.

The thesis review:

- enables the School to determine collectively that the work should be ready for assessment by the expected date;
- allows any differences of opinion between the candidate and the advisory team about the readiness of the thesis for assessment to be aired and settled collegially;
- 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.

To achieve this milestone, there are 3 requirements:

1. Written work

This should be submitted, together with a brief abstract describing the project for use in advertising the seminar, two weeks prior to the thesis review date to the Postgraduate Administration Officer.

Candidates are expected to attend the institutional seminars of other research higher degree candidates, staff or visiting scientists within the School wherever possible or alternatively at the institution or site where they are based. To that end, candidates should indicate, on their milestone report, that they have attended at least 6 such seminars since their mid-candidature review.

There are three sections in the document plus a cover page:

- a) Cover Page – Include your name, student number, degree, thesis topic, milestone being reviewed and statement certifying that you have attended the 6 institutional seminars since your mid-candidature review.
- b) Summary (approximately 1 page)
 - An outline of the thesis showing the status of each chapter/paper (i.e. completed; draft; work still to be completed – sometimes this might take the form of notations against the table of content major headings)
 - The timeline for completion of the thesis
 - Any issues/problems hindering progress and completion of the thesis
- c) Draft Thesis Abstract (approximately one page)
- d) Electronic copy of whatever thesis material is ready.

2. Oral Presentation, which consists of:

The candidate gives a 20 minute presentation to the School. 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:

- practice interviewing, verbal briefings and team skills,
- assess the candidate's expert knowledge of their research area,
- assess the clarity and progression of the structure of the thesis,
- assess the quality of the academic writing contained in the thesis,
- assess the appropriateness of the draft abstract in describing the content of the thesis to potential thesis assessors,
- discuss the mix of disciplinary knowledge required among the thesis examiners to review the breadth of work contained within the thesis, and
- see if the candidate or the advisors have any reservations or concerns about any particular individual acting as a thesis examiner.

The End