Faculty of Arts and Education
Higher Degree by Research

Candidate Guidelines – School of Communication and Creative Arts

Preamble

With the introduction of the PhDXtra in October 2016 there have been a number of changes made to candidature that seek to provide additional support for candidates. The introduction of a mandatory coursework unit (AAE900 Essential frameworks of research) in the early phase of your candidature has sought to prepare you for the remainder of your PhD journey. This document provides you with some additional detail to support the development of your Confirmation of Candidature Research Proposal and your Oral Presentation. Please refer to the Faculty Confirmation and Procedures document for detailed requirements of the format of your confirmation documentation.

There are two types of thesis structure options that candidates in the School of Communication & Creative Arts may elect to present:

- Conventional Thesis
- Thesis by Creative Product & Exegesis

Details about these various formats can be located at Thesis structure options.

SCCA Specific Information

Resources for SCCA Creative Arts HDRs:

- SCCA supports HDRs in the Creative Arts on campus by providing access to facilities including gallery and other spaces for exhibition (such as, the Phoenix Gallery at Burwood, and the Project Space at Waterfront, Geelong), digital image production studios and printing environments, practice development and performance studio spaces for theatre, dance and visual arts (such as, the Searby Studio for Visual Arts), studio spaces and offices, animation and editing suites, and resources including access to specialised equipment, creative technologies, and work spaces for quiet or collaborative sessions. Further information is available from your supervisors, Professor David Cross, Associate Professor Patrick Pound, Senior Operations Coordinator, Bradley Axiak, or the SCCA HDR Coordinator, Associate Professor Patrick West.

The following web links might also be useful:

SCCA Facilities
SCCA Staff Listing

SCCA HDR Seminar Series

SCCA runs a monthly seminar series from March to December reserved solely for presentations by SCCA HDR students and for discussion of matters concerning HDR study in SCCA. All staff and advanced-level (Honours or above) students from across the Faculty are welcome to attend. The series provides a friendly, supportive yet rigorous environment within which to present on any aspect of your HDR project. Presentations of early stage work are just as welcome as those in more developed formats. The series is an ideal venue for sharing ideas...
with HDR peers and academic colleagues, trialling a “dry run” of a confirmation talk, or preparing for a conference presentation. Enquiries to the SCCA HDR Coordinator, Associate Professor Patrick West.

**SCCA PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts Special Requirements**

Candidates enrolled in the PhD by Prior Publications in the Creative Arts degree are required to enrol in the mandatory coursework unit AAE900 Essential Frameworks of Research and to meet the obligation of satisfactorily engaging with their peers and the unit convenor in the online discussion environment. However, they are not required to complete the assessment for AAE900. This assessment is replaced for these students by the progress meetings as described in the guidelines relevant to this degree. These guidelines may be obtained from SCCA HDR Coordinator, Associate Professor Patrick West.

**Confirmation of Candidature**

As per the *Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Academic Progress Procedure* all HDR candidates (Master by Research and PhD) need to complete their confirmation of candidature. In the Faculty of Arts and Education, this occurs at **9 months** for full time PhD candidates, or within 15 months for part time candidates. For Masters Candidates with no intention to transfer to a PhD, it is recommended that this occur within **6 months** of candidature for full time candidates, and within 9 months for part time candidates. Candidates seeking to transfer from Masters to PhD should follow the timeline applicable to PhD candidates.

Please note, prior to your confirmation of candidature all candidates need to have completed the compulsory training in *Research Integrity*.

**Mandatory Coursework Unit: AAE900 Essential frameworks of research**

For all candidates enrolled in the PhDXtra, completion of a mandatory coursework unit is required. The assessment for this unit has been developed with a view to supporting candidates towards successful and timely completion of their Confirmation of Candidature. As such, active weekly participation in the online discussion forum is mandatory. The assessment for this unit includes:

- Oral presentation – Public Confirmation (Ungraded Pass)

**Confirmation of Candidature Research Proposal (written document)**

This written document seeks to provide the panel of examiners with an overview of the proposed research and the way in which it has been framed in order to help them assess the candidate’s development in research skills, discipline knowledge and understanding of the conceptual and theoretical framing of their proposed research.

**Conventional Format**

Students whose work leads to a conventional thesis should present a document for the confirmation of approximately 15,000 words (usually based upon two draft chapters—Literature Review and Background and Research Methodology & Design—as outlined below). The document should be forwarded two weeks in advance to the Faculty Research Services office.

The document should comprise six major sections

1. Statement of Problem and Context (approximately 750 words) Including:
   - a brief statement of the overarching research problem or question
• the rationale for the proposed research and its significance
• a discussion of relevant theoretical perspectives
• and the disciplinary or intellectual context in which the research will be conducted

2. Literature Review and Background (approximately 9000 words)
• Students should demonstrate that they are familiar with the relevant literature, i.e. relevant current debates

3. Research Methodology and Design (approximately 5000 words)
• Students should demonstrate that they are able to discuss their proposed research methodology and design, i.e. how the overarching problem or question is to be resolved and the appropriateness of the methodology and design for the particular research problem or question

4. Bibliography (approximately 250 words)
• Key representative works consulted or cited, presented in the format typically used in the relevant field of enquiry

5. Ethics Clearance
• A brief statement of whether the research project requires ethics clearance, and, if so, anticipated time of application should be noted in (6)

6. Research Plan and Timetable
• Students should demonstrate that they can clearly describe their work schedule to date and indicate their future work schedule up to the anticipated submission date of the thesis on a chapter-by-chapter or phase-by-phase basis, usually:
  o 3yrs FT or 6yrs PT (PhD)
  o 2yrs FT or 4yrs PT (Master)

Creative Practice & Exegetical Format

Students not involved with the traditional or conventional thesis format, that is, those involved in studio practice or creative writing, should develop a document for the confirmation of approximately 6,000 words, accompanied by a relevant Sample of Practice sufficient to elucidate the key areas of investigation, future directions, and principal ideas and modes of the creative component.

Using the headings outlined below, these students should document a plan of their work, the framework of their research, their positioning in the field or fields, a literature review and background, and show how the exegetical and creative components of their research project constitute a single thesis. In line with the disposition of practice-based research, students need to demonstrate the necessity of the creative component to the solution of their overarching research problem or question.

The document should comprise seven major sections, including a Sample/s of Practice.

1. Statement of Problem and Context of Practice/Creative Work/Performance (approximately 1500 words). Including:
   • a brief statement of the overarching research problem/question
   • the rationale for the proposed research and its significance
   • a discussion of relevant theoretical perspectives
   • and the disciplinary or intellectual context in which the research will be conducted
2. Literature Review and Background – for both exegesis and practice components (approximately 3000 words in total)
   • Students should demonstrate that they are familiar with the relevant literature, i.e. relevant current debates in and traversing both components

3. Research Methodology and Design – for both exegesis and practice components (approximately 1500 words in total)
   • Students should demonstrate that they are able to discuss their proposed research methodology and design for both components of their thesis, i.e how the overarching problem or question is to be resolved and, generally, the appropriateness of practice-based research for the particular research problem or question

4. Bibliography (approximately 250 words)
   • Key representative works consulted or cited, presented in the format typically used in the relevant field/s of enquiry

5. Ethics Clearance
   • A brief statement of whether the research project requires ethics clearance, and, if so, anticipated time of application should be noted in (6)

6. Research Plan and Timetable
   • Students should demonstrate that they can clearly describe their work schedule to date and indicate their future work schedule up to the anticipated submission date of the thesis, which is usually: 3yrs FT or 6yrs PT (PhD); 2yrs FT or 4yrs PT (Master) on a chapter-by-chapter or phase-by-phase basis

7. Sample/s of Practice
   • Students should present examples of creative work/s that have sought to test, refine and elaborate the formative research problem/question so as to outline how the practice-based research has developed pre-confirmation

The Confirmation of Candidature Research Proposal needs to be submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Education Research Office at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled Confirmation. Submission is via email address artsed-research@deakin.edu.au

Confirmation of Candidature Oral Presentation (Public Confirmation): approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

Each PhDXtra candidate is required to provide an oral presentation of their research proposal at a public confirmation before engaging in a private panel discussion of their work with the confirmation of candidature panel. This presentation will require the candidate to provide an overview of their research to their HDR peers, academics and other audience members and will include a brief Question and Answer session prior to the one-hour private feedback session with members of the confirmation panel. It is recommended that candidates consider the following in the preparation of their presentation:

   • Style of presentation: How will the candidate convey key information about their proposed research (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, other presentation formats)
   • Content:
     o Researchable problem and relevant contextual information (including research question/s)
Significance of this research – what will be the contribution to knowledge that this research makes?

Outline of key research/theoretical debates about this research problem

Conceptual framing – would be helpful to present this in a diagram

Proposed methodology and research design (methods)

Tensions and blockages - what challenges does the candidate face in conceptualising this research project?

Procedures: Confirmation of Candidature

The confirmation of candidature panel is organised by the Faculty Research Services office in consultation with the (Executive) Principal Supervisor approximately 2 months prior to the scheduled date. The (Executive) Principal Supervisor is required to arrange a Chair, an external panel member, and a school representative. The panel generally comprises:

- Panel Chair – drawn from the Professoriate, who will chair the meeting and compile the report of the meeting that conveys the recommendations of the panel
- (Executive) Principal or acting Principal supervisor
- Co-supervisor/s or associate supervisors (or other members of supervision panel such as external supervisor or research advisor if applicable)
- An independent and external academic (from another institution, faculty, school or independent practice)
- School representative

Although it is desirable that the candidate attend the confirmation of candidature in person, in exceptional circumstances, should he/she be unable to attend in person for reasons of distance (e.g., overseas off-shore candidate) or disability, then a video-conference or remote access option will be organised.

Panel members will be expected to have read the written document and engaged with the sample/s of practice (if appropriate) that will have been provided electronically at least two weeks prior to the confirmation of candidature confirmation. Panel members will engage in dialogue during the confirmation of candidature with the candidate and supervisors in order to:

- Confirm that the proposed project meets the expectations for early phase candidates
- Advise on appropriate modifications to the proposed project

Following discussion with the student, the panel will meet alone in order to discuss the proposed research and/or its supervision and to formulate its recommendations. The candidate will be invited to re-join the panel, following its deliberations, in order to receive the panel’s proposed recommendation and to discuss any implications, requirements and conditions attached to the proposed recommendation. The official recommendation will follow by email to the candidate within two weeks.

Outcomes: Confirmation of Candidature

Following the confirmation panel’s recommendation, the Chair of the confirmation panel will complete an online report. The Faculty HDR Co-ordinator will consider this. The official outcome is then compiled into a written report that the Faculty Research Services administrative officer will send to the candidate and the confirmation panel.

If the confirmation panel recommends delayed confirmation—forming a Part Two of the confirmation proceedings—the required additional tasks must be completed within three months of the original confirmation and a face-to-face meeting (ideally) of the confirmation panel must take place. The student may or may not be asked to attend this Part Two meeting.
In summary, the possible outcomes of the Confirmation of Candidature process are summarised in figure 1 and listed below.

**Confirmation outcomes:**

1. **Confirmation recommended** (perhaps with minor required amendments to be checked on by supervisors)

2. **Confirmation delayed pending submission of additional task/s** – any additional requirements which must be completed prior to confirmation being approved triggers a Part Two confirmation. Additional tasks must be completed within three months of the original confirmation.

3. **Confirmation not recommended** — this recommendation would only be appropriate in exceptional circumstances such as submission of a plagiarized document.

![Figure 1: Possible outcomes of the confirmation process](image-url)

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