

## **School of Physics: guidelines for academic staff who are serving on postgraduate (PhD/MPhil/MRes) annual review Panels**

The annual review meeting is an opportunity for students, their supervisors, and the School to review all aspects of the candidature, develop a plan of action for the next year, and to provide an independent and objective view of progress. A review will normally be completed with 20 minutes.

The reviews should be conducted in a friendly and non-confrontational manner. The primary aim is to benefit the student, and to identify any problems at the earliest possible stage.

If there are likely to be any major concerns raised, it is helpful if students and/or their supervisors can brief the panel Chair *before the annual review meeting*.

**Note: PhD students (not MPhil/MRes) are required to have their candidature confirmed as part of the review process in their first year of enrolment. See the section on "confirmation of candidature" at the end of this document. Confirmation reviews will typically take 40 mins.**

The reviews begin with the student being introduced to the Panel. The student must have brought along his/her annual review form, appropriately filled out, including comments from the supervisor. All members of the Panel should take a short time to review the form. If the form is not available or is incomplete, the review should be terminated and re-convened when the form is ready.

Using the completed form as a guide, the review panel should touch on the following issues—these are from the definitive UNSW guide for postgraduate annual reviews, available here: <http://www.grs.unsw.edu.au/downloads/ConfirmationandProgressReviewProceduresPhDMResMPhil030909.pdf>—You should consult this document if the result of the review is "marginal" or "unsatisfactory".

- (a) Intellectual property, OHS, ethics—both the candidate and supervisor should understand these requirements as they relate to the research project.
- (b) Infrastructure and resources—are they adequate and appropriate for the research?
- (c) The role of the supervisor and co-supervisor or joint supervisor—the Panel should be satisfied that expectations are clear, that supervisors are fulfilling their obligations at the appropriate level, and that appropriate communication exists between all parties.
- (d) Progress of the research in the previous 12 months against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones.
- (e) Any problems (personal, technical or academic) identified by either the candidate or the supervisor or co-supervisor or joint supervisor—the Head of School/Postgraduate Coordinator and Associate Dean (Research) may need to be consulted particularly if appointment of a new supervisor is proposed.
- (f) An assessment of whether progress has been at the level expected for the stage of enrolment in candidature.
- (g) Key research objectives/criteria and milestones for the next 12 months.
- (h) Anticipated thesis submission date—this date should take into account the census dates (31 March and 31 August).

(i) Skills development—assessment of whether additional skills and training are required and a development plan.

(j) Such other issues as the Panel considers relevant to the discipline or research area.

(k) Date of the next review.

After completing this discussion, the student should be asked to briefly leave the room, and the supervisor should be invited in. The Panel and supervisor can then discuss any issues that have been raised.

The supervisor then leaves the room, the student returns, and the Chair fills out the sections on Panel comments at the end of the review form. Please be clear and concise. Fill out all relevant sections.

The student is then asked to read and sign the form. Please note: this does not signify that the student agrees with the outcomes, simply that the student has read them. If the candidate does not agree with the outcomes, they need to provide written reasons to the Postgraduate Coordinator.

Please then give the form to Michael Ashley, who will organise HoS signatures, photocopies and transmission to the GRS.

Thank you for your assistance with this important process!

## **Additional instructions for confirmation of candidature of PhD students**

If the annual review meeting is also the confirmation review, the student must have provided the following additional information to the Chair of the Panel in advance of the meeting:

A written research proposal including:

- the key objectives/criteria and milestones of the research, and
- a literature review, and
- a justification of the research, and
- an assessment of the resources required to support the research, and
- a statement of how the research will be conducted in accordance with the UNSW policies for intellectual property, OHS and ethics.

If the proposal is not provided, the review should be terminated and re-convened when the proposal is ready.

In addition, the student is required to make a ~10 minute oral presentation to the Panel at the beginning of the review (with the supervisor present). The talk should describe the thesis research, roughly at the level of a *Scientific American* article.

The Panel should examine the evidence provided and satisfy themselves that the research plan will lead to a PhD, and that progress has been satisfactory.

Michael Ashley (Postgraduate Coordinator, Physics)  
February 2011