Guidelines: HDR Confirmation of Candidature

These guidelines detail the processes and expectations for HDR Confirmation of Candidature in the Faculty of Education.

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Confirmation of Candidature Process

Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) is required before the end of the first 12 months for full time PhD & Ed.D Candidates and 6 months for Masters by Research. It is an important milestone and opportunity to take stock. It is a process that allows the University to assess academic development, performance, suitability of project (including available resources) and supervisory team to ensure successful completion of HDR candidature. There are clear published criteria to inform the content of your presentation (See p.7). CoC is also an excellent chance for candidates to receive feedback on their proposed research from the broader academic community and to make improvements in a supportive, educative, and generative environment. Guests from other Faculties, professional organisations and individuals may be invited at the presenter's request. All Faculty members and HDR students receive an invitation to each CoC.

CoC requirements as stipulated by the UTAS HDR Candidature Policy include:

• Peer Review to assess:

- the merit and integrity of the proposed research;
- whether the research is of a suitable scope and standard for the degree; and
- whether the candidate has the capacity to complete the project and undertake the degree at the required level.

• The Research Plan has been appropriately completed and updated;

• Ethics Requirements have been considered (see p. 2 for further information on ethics);

• Submission of appropriate written work (see pp. 2-3);

• Completion of an oral presentation to the School (including a question and answer session);

• That the minimum number of supervisory meetings have been held; and

• Completion of the required Graduate Certificate in Research unit/s (i.e., Doctoral candidates are expected to have completed XGR501 and one other Grad Cert Res unit; Masters students should have

completed XGR501 and be enrolled in their second unit. Ed.D candidates should have completed their first three units – XGR501, EPA950 & EPA951 or at least be in the process of undertaking a third unit.

Further Information related to CoC is available in the UTAS HDR Candidature Policy at this link:

http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/667205/Higher-Degree-by-Research-Candidature-Policy.pdf

The Graduate Research Website also has information at:

http://www.utas.edu.au/research-admin/graduate-research/current-candidates/monitoring-your-progress/completing-each-milestone

In some cases the CoC process is used as part of the evidence to apply for transfer from a Masters by Research to a Doctoral degree. If this is the case, you need to submit the appropriate form (link below) with your written work, and have the work reviewed by an academic from outside UTAS.

http://www.utas.edu.au/research-admin/graduate-research/policies-and-forms/hdr-candidates-forms-and-guidelines

Research Plan

An updated PDF version of your research plan needs to be submitted for CoC along with the significant piece of writing (a template is available on the graduate research website). A draft Research Plan should have been completed after 3 months of candidature and is signed off in iGrad) by the primary supervisor.

Ethics

If your project requires ethical approval, this should be noted in the Regulatory approvals section of the research plan. Within the Faculty of Education, it is advised that the CoC take place before any Ethics application is submitted, to provide peer review for the project.

Written requirement

The written document submitted as part of the CoC process should give an overview of the whole research proposal. It should contain an introduction, mini literature review, and a draft methodology chapter.

• The introduction should explain the context which situates the study, and how the proposed study will add to the literature.

• The literature review should demonstrate substantive critical academic engagement with, and synthesis of, key literature that provides background and theoretical frameworks for the study.

• The methodology chapter should include methodological considerations, research questions, proposed methods/procedures, participants, data collection strategies, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

• The written document should be substantive in nature (approximately 5000-8000 words).

This document should be submitted to both iGrad and the CoC Committee (via STEP 4 on p.4) TWO WEEKS prior to the oral presentation.

This document will be assessed by the CoC Committee. (Please see the Success Criteria at the end of these guidelines for further clarification).

In essence, this written document is the skeleton of the first three chapters of a thesis (introduction, literature review, and method), and must demonstrate that the candidate has a clear understanding of the context for the study (e.g., extant research in the area) has well-formulated research questions, and a well-conceptualised study including the methods to be used to gather and analyse relevant data. The document should allow the CoC committee to determine whether or not the project is of appropriate standard for a research higher degree and likely to succeed.

Oral Presentation

Oral competence, presentation skills, and the ability to respond to questions are all essential professional skills for HDR candidates and graduates. A candidate is expected to provide a public oral presentation usually within the School immediately prior to CoC. All supervisors and members of the CoC Committee will attend this presentation.

The oral presentation serves a variety of functions: It provides the candidate with the opportunity to discuss aspects of his/her research to a group of peers and academic staff members and receive expert and constructive advice on the proposed project, its scope, feasibility, theoretical approach, method, and/or design. This is discussion will be essential to help prepare the candidate for submitting an ethics review committee application.

The presentation will be followed by a time for questions and answers from the general audience. After this, the CoC Committee will convene with the candidate alone, and then with the supervisory team alone, before determining the confirmation outcome. The CoC Committee must deem the candidate's verbal and presentation skills, demonstrated in the oral component, to be at an appropriate standard for their level of study and the chosen discipline.

As a guide for oral presentations within the School of Education, we recommend the following:

• Aim to talk for 20-25 minutes to allow 10-15 minutes for questions and discussion;

• Limit slides to 10-15, with no more than 5 dot points per slide;

• Limit the information provided on background and literature review - the main focus should be on the research questions, research design, and method;

• Clearly state research questions by providing information on "What are you planning to ask?" "How will you answer the question?" "What have you done thus far?" and "What is next?";

• Include a timeline; and

• Talk to supervisor(s) about the presentation and conduct practice presentations with supervisors or other critical friends to seek feedback.

Booking Your Oral Presentation

The oral presentation should occur when all other CoC requirements have been met (sometimes Grad Cert Research assessment tasks can still be pending).

• Bookings for oral presentations should be made through Education Programs (Education.Programs@utas.edu.au);

• All members of the CoC Committee are required to attend the oral presentation and declare any possible or perceived conflicts of interest at the panel stage of proceedings.

• The Oral Presentation can be held at any time which is suitable for the candidate and the Confirmation of Candidature Committee. Please follow the steps below to book your CoC Presentation:

Step 1: Ask your supervisors to liaise with the responsible GRC to nominate two members for the Confirmation of Candidature Committee external to the supervision team, and receive confirmation of their attendance. These members should be senior research academics from either within or external to the Faculty of Education. Possible or perceived conflicts of interest should be considered at this time.

Step 2: Find two options for a day + time that suits you and ALL of your supervisors, the GRC, and the members of the CoC Committee.

Step 3: AFTER you have agreement from all members of the CoC Committee, book in your time + day to the Faculty Executive Officer – Education Programs Linda.Page@utas.edu.au.   At this time please notify the Executive Officer – Education Programs of your presenting location/campus, the names of the CoC committee and if you wish to have the oral presentation recorded. This officer will then notify all members of the CoC Committee.

Step 4: At least 2 weeks in advance of your CoC send the 1) title of your presentation, 2) abstract, 3) research plan, 4) written requirement 5) Photographic head shot to the Faculty Executive Officer – Education Programs who will circulate these to the Confirmation of Candidature Committee and use this information for marketing purposes

Confirmation of Candidature Committee and Meeting

The CoC Committee Meeting will occur immediately after the oral presentation. The committee consists of:

• One GRC;

• Supervisors;

• An academic from the Faculty of Education or elsewhere external to the supervision team with expertise in the topic or field of research; and

• Deputy HoS (Research) or ADR or a senior academic (minimum level C).

All members of the CoC committee will have read the written work prior to and be in attendance at the oral presentation. Candidates may elect to have a support person (such as another HDR student) present at the CoC meeting although that person will not act in an assessment capacity.

Guests at the presentation and subsequent Q & A leave the meeting following the presentation and initial questioning and the panel continue to raise pertinent questions with the candidate.

Discussion at a CoC is invariably collegial, constructive, cordial, professional and transparent. However, there can, on relatively rare occasions, be tensions or unresolved issues between HDR students and their supervisors. The CoC has a duty of care towards both HDR candidates and their supervisors. There can also be occasions where there will be robust disagreements between panel members in their assessment of a candidate's progress. For these reasons the panel will (usually briefly):

- talk to the candidate without their supervisors present;
- talk to the supervisors without the candidate being present;
- have a private panel discussion to finalise agreement on collective agreed feedback to the candidate.

A summary of this feedback will be conveyed verbally to the candidate at this point. On occasions there may be a delay whilst written feedback from the panel is confirmed and then relayed to the candidate in a timely fashion through iGrad.

The CoC committee will decide if the candidate has satisfactorily met the criteria and requirements to be confirmed as a candidature. There are five possible outcomes:

a) Candidature is confirmed;

b) [Very Rare] The Pro-Vice Chancellor queries the panel's confirmation, conditions are applied to the conferral of CoC and the pre-confirmation period is extended for up to three months;

c) Candidature cannot be confirmed and the pre-confirmation period is extended for up to three months;

d) Candidature cannot be confirmed and should be terminated;

e) (For Doctoral Candidates Only) – Candidature be transferred from a Doctoral to a Master's Degree; OR

e) Where a transfer to a Doctoral from a Master's program is requested, whether a recommendation for approval be sent to the Dean for Graduate Research.

In cases where the committee feels that the CoC criteria have not been met, the candidate may be asked to do further work and either resubmit the written component and/or deliver another oral presentation. If, after additional attempts to meet the requirements of CoC, a candidate is unable to demonstrate satisfactory performance and progress, her/his candidature may be terminated or transferred as above.

To help make the CoC process more transparent a flow chart and Guideline Success Criteria are available below. These Guideline Success Criteria may be used by the CoC Committee in the assessment of the written work and oral presentation.
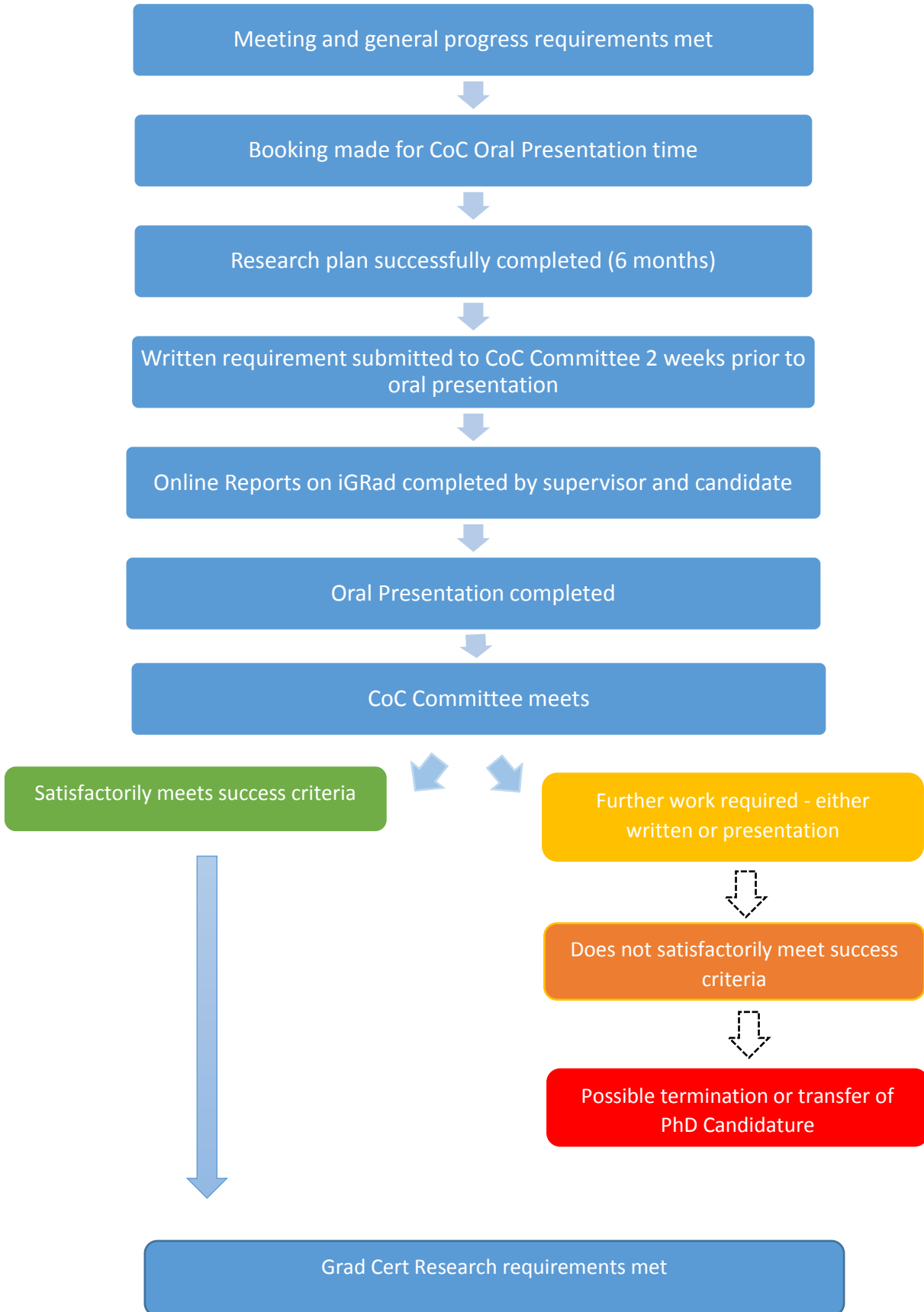
Advice for CoC Committee Members

It is preferable for the CoC committee members to read the candidate's written work at least one week prior to the CoC presentation. It can be helpful for the primary supervisor to have a briefing conversation with the responsible GRC. If a committee member has significant concerns about either the quality of the work, the suitability of the project, or the progress of the candidate, s/he should speak directly to the GRC as soon as possible (preferably a week before the CoC presentation).

Online CoC Reports on iGRad

Confirmation is documented online through iGRad. The candidate and the primary supervisor must complete reports prior to the Confirmation Committee meeting. Once the CoC Committee meeting and outcome is completed online, the GRC will complete the process on iGRad.

Confirmation of Candidature Process Flow Chart (PhD)

Meeting and general progress requirements met

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Booking made for CoC Oral Presentation time

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Research plan successfully completed (6 months)

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Written requirement submitted to CoC Committee 2 weeks prior to oral presentation

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Online Reports on iGRad completed by supervisor and candidate

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Oral Presentation completed

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CoC Committee meets

Satisfactorily meets success criteria

Further work required - either written or presentation

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Does not satisfactorily meet success criteria

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Possible termination or transfer of PhD Candidature

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Grad Cert Research requirements met

Success Criteria for Confirmation of Candidature – Faculty of Education

The following criteria act as a guide for both candidates and the COC committee members. CoC writing and presentation should be viewed and judged in an holistic manner, therefore, these criteria should be viewed with some flexibility and adaptability.

Success Criteria (Both written and oral requirements)	Improvement/ discussion needed	Confirmed
The candidate demonstrates a sound grasp of the context for their research (i.e. literature in their field)		
Research aims (purpose) and questions are appropriate and are articulated clearly		
Theory and methodology relevant to the research is clearly communicated		
Research design and methods are appropriate and clearly communicated		
Ethical issues have been given due consideration		
The candidate is able to articulate why their research is useful/needed and how it makes a contribution to their field		
Writing skills are at an appropriate standard for HDR work (i.e., synthesis and coherence of argument rather than overly descriptive)		
Oral presentation skills are at an appropriate standard for HDR work		
The Research Plan is up to date, realistic and feasible		
At least five meetings have been held between the candidate and all members of the supervisory team		
Coursework requirements have been met: PhD = XGR501 + 1 other unit Ed.D = XGR501, EPA950, EPA951 (at least in progress) M Res = XGR501 and enrolled in one other unit		