

The first year of the PhD or MPhil – Department of Pharmacology Expectations

In order to assist you with an effective start to your MPhil or PhD it is recommended that you appraise yourself (and remind your supervisor) of some significant requirements in the first year of your candidature.

Advisory Committee (the Panel) composition

The composition of the panel should be negotiated between you and your principal supervisor. For the candidate, the advisory committee provides a source of support and communication beyond that provided by the supervisor(s). The advisory committee acts to broaden the connection of candidates to departments (reducing isolation), provides increased breadth of feedback on general or specific issues pertaining to the thesis research, and acts as first port of call for discussion of issues that the candidate may wish to raise with persons other than the supervisor(s).

The advisory committee must comprise at least three people including the supervisor(s). The committee chair will be a person other than a supervisor, will be an experienced supervisor themselves, and will be a member of the administrative department (i.e. the Department of Pharmacology).

It is strongly recommended that at least one additional independent person (i.e. non-supervisor) be included, who may be a member of the department or external to the department. These additional members could be expert in aspects of the candidate's research and can complement the expertise of the supervisor(s). The committee must be established early into candidature, and at the latest by six months from start of PhD candidature (or three months from the start of MPhil candidature).

For full details, including duties of the advisory committee and definitions of membership, see:

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/phd/bk/candidature.html#committee>

You should start an on-going discussion about intellectual property (IP) and the authorship of scientific papers. There is useful information at:

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/phd/bk/research.html#IP>

and

<http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/ip/home>

Once you start, it's a good time to ensure your hypothesis is clearly identified, become familiar with the literature supporting your hypothesis, and be sure that by pursuing your stated aims, you can adequately test the hypothesis. You may wish to convene an early meeting (after about 1-2 months) of your advisory panel to share your hypothesis and aims and get some feedback.

At 3 months (MPhil students) or 6 months (PhD students), a formal meeting of the advisory panel will be convened to review your progress towards confirmation. This is a particularly important meeting for you to take stock of your original plans and initial results and to ensure that the feasibility of your main experimental approach to your hypothesis is established. Panel members may expect to hear a Powerpoint presentation of your progress or to receive a copy of your interim data (check with your supervisor re the format of your particular panel meeting) and will then give you feedback. The attendance at the meeting and any important areas for focus will be recorded on a form available from Fanoula Mouratidis. A copy of the completed form must be held in the department files.

Research-in-progress presentations

In November each year the first year RHD students make presentations on their work in a "research-in-progress" (RIP) session dedicated for this purpose. We see this as a celebration of your scientific progress; 20 min is allocated to these presentations, of which at least 5 min is expected to be discussion. However, a presentation in the RIP series earlier in your candidature can be a valuable exercise. The RIP seminar series is attended by all members of the Department and is an informal way for you to gain advice from other researchers not involved in your project, as well as valuable practise at presenting your data to a scientific audience. All RHD students enrolled in the Department are required to give one of these presentations for EACH year of their candidature.

The Confirmation Process (for PhD students)

Confirmation is a key point in candidature. Its purpose is to determine whether or not work to date on the PhD research proposal indicates a strong likelihood that it will result in a high quality thesis, completed in the required time.

PhD candidates are first admitted as probationary candidates, except those who have converted from a masters by research, or in some cases, have transferred from research higher degree enrolment at another institution.

Probationary candidature is normally for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months (or 12 and 24 months for part-time students) ending once confirmation is confirmed. After 6 months (full-time) enrolment the faculty or graduate school sends a confirmation report form to prompt the candidate to commence preparation for the confirmation process.

The School of Graduate Studies outlines their requirements for you in this process (see Postgraduate Essentials <http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/programs/pge/>). For confirmation, you are required to: prepare a written report of between 3,000-10,000 words; make an oral presentation of 20-30 minutes; and verbally defend the proposed research project to your Advisory Committee (panel). It is essential that the report be circulated at least a week before the panel is due to meet. At the panel meeting your oral presentation should address key issues establishing: the feasibility of your approach; the progress to date; any obstacles and your plans to resolve or navigate around them; and your plan that sees you complete your thesis and its write-up within the 3 year period of candidature (or 2 years if MPhil).

At this point, the panel may recommend confirmation of candidature, or it may be that there is some further refinement of your confirmation report required before "sign-off" on a confirmation recommendation. The panel may also recommend extension of the probationary candidature to a specified date.

For full details, see:

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/phd/bk/candidature.html#probation>

Subsequent obligations

You should feel free to consult with your panel members as you perceive the need. However, a formal meeting of the panel should be convened at least every 12 months (or 6 months for MPhil candidates) to review your progress against your current plan. It is expected at this meeting that you will present an update of progress highlighting any areas of concern, or on which you would like specific feedback. PhD candidates are required to submit an annual progress report. Completion of progress reports is required for the continuation of enrolment and any scholarship held. Progress report forms are sent directly to the candidate approximately 2 months prior to the due date. The due date will be adjusted for any approved periods of leave or variations between full and part time study. Progress reports provide an opportunity for both the candidate and advisory committee to

review and evaluate progress on the project, and to alert the head of department and the Chair of the RHD Committee of any difficulties in candidature.

Forms for MPhil and PhD students are available for download from:

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/forms.html>

It is expected that you will attend at least one scientific meeting a year and that you would attend an international meeting at least once during your candidature, should you and your supervisor agree that the work you are doing warrants such presentations.

We hope that you will appreciate that the intent of these various activities is to assist you in achieving your full potential as an MPhil or PhD scholar, ensuring that you obtain quality publications and the grounding that you need to move on with a highly successful career.

Contacts & useful information:

RHD Administrator

Fanoula Mouratidis

E: fanoula@unimelb.edu.au

T: 8344 7483

RHD Coordinator

A/Prof Christine Wright

E: cwright@unimelb.edu.au

T: 8344 8219

The Melbourne School of Graduate Research

Graduate Centre (1888 Building)

Reception staff are available via: Tel: 8344 8599 Mon-Fri, 8:45am-5pm (3pm on Wed)

email: grad-info@unimelb.edu.au

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/>

Resources & Useful Links for Graduate Researchers

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/links.html>

Academic Skills Unit

The **Academic Skills Unit** helps undergraduate and graduate students with academic writing, time and task management, oral presentations, exam preparation, English language development and much more! We conduct workshops and individual tutorials and provide the resources that all students need to be successful at university.

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/>

Academic Enrichment Services

Academic Enrichment Services (AES) works in partnership with academic units to research, develop, deliver and evaluate programs to enhance the [Melbourne Experience](#) for students. This site integrates links to the Academic Skills Unit, Careers & Employment, International Student Services, Student Engagement and Student Equity.

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/aes/>

Graduate Students Association (GSA)

GSA provides representation, advocacy, facilities, events, print services, publications and funding opportunities for graduate research students.

<http://www.gsa.unimelb.edu.au/>

Melbourne School of Graduate Research Supervision Checklist

Have you & your supervisor discussed expectations & reached agreement about the following:

Supervisory Meetings: time/frequency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time commitments expected	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thesis outline/Research plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is needed to complete an adequate thesis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relations with co-supervisors at same site/off-site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timelines: Confirmation, progress reports, completion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring progress/providing feedback: What's required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timing of feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities available: Generally available in Department	<input type="checkbox"/>
For specific project	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Resources:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eg for conferences, study abroad, scholarships, field trips	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intellectual Property issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Authorship on manuscripts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethical Issues: Code of conduct for research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human/Animal ethics clearances	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occupational Health & Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Courses needed for successful, timely completion:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eg library skills, computer skills, writing presentation etc	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
MSGR/GSA opportunities/courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
How this organization works	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eg University, Department	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involvement with Departmental activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eg student groups, seminars, committees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Support Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eg MSGR, GSA, Academic Skills Unit, Careers & Employment Services, etc	<input type="checkbox"/>