

## THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PhD Department of Pharmacology Expectations

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

### **The Panel composition**

The composition of the panel should be negotiated between you and your principal supervisor. Usually you will have two supervisors, although this is not mandated. It is advisable to seek to have senior academics appointed to your panel, and at least one and preferably two, should come from outside your research group or their collaborative network. The reason for this is to provide you with an independent sounding board for issues that may arise, where you need to hear the views of an experienced academic who has no specific interest in the scientific work you are doing.

You should start an on-going discussion about IP and the authorship of scientific papers.

Once you start, its a good time to become familiar with the literature supporting your hypothesis, ensure your hypothesis is clearly identified and that by pursuing your stated aims, you can adequately test the hypothesis. You may wish to convene an early meeting (after about a month) of your supervisory panel (by now you should have a panel in place) to share your hypothesis and aims and get some feedback. An early presentation in the "research-in-progress" series can be a valuable exercise.

At 6 months, a formal meeting of the supervisory 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 will expect to hear a PowerPoint presentation of your progress 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 should be held in the department files.

In November each year the first year PhD students make presentations on their work in a RIP session dedicated for this purpose. We see this as a celebration of your scientific progress and a slightly extended period of 30 min is allocated to these presentations, of which at least 10 min is expected to be discussion.

The culmination of your first 12 months candidature is 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/>). The Department supports you through the confirmation by providing you with the opportunity to receive feedback from your supervisors and your other panel members on your confirmation report. It is essential that this report be circulated at least a week before the panel is due to meet. At the panel meeting you will be expected to provide a presentation that addresses 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.

At this point, the panel may recommend confirmation, or it may be that there is some further refinement of your confirmation report required before "sign-off" on confirmation recommendation.

### 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 every 12 months 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.

You are required to make an annual presentation to the RIP series. 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 a PhD scholar, ensuring that you obtain quality publications and the grounding that you need to move on with a highly successful career.*

<http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/programs/pge/>