The MBio Graduate School Management Committee proposes that a uniform system of PhD Student Advisory Committees should be established across all MBio Departments and Institutes. The proposed system meets the Monash Research and Graduate School (MRGS) requirements (see Appendix) and is similar to existing mechanisms in some departments but represents a modification of the current systems in other departments. Details of the proposed system are outlined below.

A. Advisory Committee Composition

Each PhD student should have an advisory committee consisting of at least:
- The student’s primary supervisor
- The student’s co-supervisor
- One academic or research staff member with expertise/interest in the general area of the student’s research. This committee member must not have a direct involvement in the student’s research project (e.g. as a collaborator) but will normally be a member of the same academic unit in which the student is based. This “independent, internal” member will chair Committee meetings.
- One “external” researcher. This person should be someone from outside the student’s department (e.g. another department or institute) or from a different research area within the department. He/she should have past experience as a supervisor of PhD student(s).

B. Selection/Appointment of Advisory Committee Members

- The student’s supervisors will automatically be members of the committee
- The “external” committee member will be recommended by the student (after consultation with his/her supervisors and with the selected researcher)
- The “independent, internal” committee member will be recommended by the Coordinator of Graduate Studies within the student’s academic unit. [This aspect of the mechanism allows the academic unit to allocate advisory committee workloads in a reasonably equitable manner]

The recommended committee will be officially appointed by the relevant Head of Department/Institute.

C. Number and Timing of Advisory Committee Meetings with the Student

At a minimum, Advisory Committees should meet with PhD candidates at the following candidature milestones, as required by MRGS (see Appendix).
1. Confirmation of Candidature (between 9 and 12 months of candidature)
2. Mid-Candidature Review (between 21 and 27 months of candidature)
3. Pre-Submission Seminar (<6 months before thesis submission)
D. Reports and Presentations

The following presentations and/or reports are required at the three committee meetings. Unless indicated, these are all MRGS requirements (see Appendix for relevant sections of MRGS Handbook).

1. **Confirmation of Candidature** (see Confirmation Guidelines and Confirmation of Candidature Form at [http://www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/research/students/confirmation.html](http://www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/research/students/confirmation.html))
   a) Oral presentation of at least 20 minutes
   b) Written Research Description, consisting of the following three sections.
      - Part I: Literature Review (at least 5000 words)
      - Part 2: Research Proposal
      - Part 3: Progress Report
      Parts 2 and 3 together constitute the Written Submission required by MRGS (see Appendix for further details). These sections, combined, should be at least 3000 words.

2. **Mid-Candidature Review**
   a) Oral presentation. The format is specified by the relevant department.
   b) Written paper which demonstrates progress (e.g. published journal article or manuscript or draft thesis chapter)
   c) Written progress report (minimum of 1000 words)

3. **Pre-Submission Seminar**
   a) Public oral presentation (typically 30-45 minutes)
   b) Written thesis summary (≤3000 words) and chapter outline

*Prepared May 2011*
Appendix: Excerpts from MRGS Handbook for Doctoral and MPhil Degrees
(http://www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/research/doctoral/)

Appendix D, Sections 1&2:

**Confirmation of doctoral candidature and upgrade from masters to doctoral candidature**

1. **Code of practice**

A code of minimum practice has been developed to assist faculties with clear and consistent guidelines for the confirmation of doctoral and MPhil candidature and upgrade from masters to doctoral candidature.

These are minimum requirements; some faculties have additional requirements.

1.1 **Minimum period of candidature**

A candidate should normally be enrolled for a minimum period of nine months of full-time candidature (or equivalent) before the confirmation/upgrade process may be commenced.

2. **Evidence of sufficient progress**

Please note that this is a code of minimum practice. Departments and faculties may have additional requirements (eg submission of one or more thesis chapters as part of the upgrade or confirmation process).

2.1 **Oral presentation**

An oral presentation on the research project should be given either at a departmental seminar and/or viva voce. Members of the review panel* should be in attendance.

The oral presentation should explore the research undertaken to date and the anticipated future directions of the research program.

2.2 **Written submission**

A progress report and publication list (if applicable) should be submitted by the student. A suggested format for the report is as follows:

- Title of research report/thesis
- Statement of the research problem(s)
  - (i) introduction
  - (ii) research question or hypothesis
  - (iii) subsidiary questions
  - (iv) review of relevant research and theory
- The Procedure
  - (i) theoretical and conceptual framework (ii) analytical techniques and research design
- Timetable for completing research report/thesis and a detailed statement of progress to date
- Brief bibliography
- List of publications produced during probationary candidature (if applicable).

The progress report should be a minimum of 1,000 words but many faculties have additional requirements:

- Faculty of Arts requires a 7,000 to 10,000 word report. Students upgrading to PhD must also provide a chapter of the thesis.
- Faculty of Art and Design requires a 3,000 words minimum draft chapter of the exegesis/thesis.
- Faculty of Business and Economics requires DBA students to address each research phase separately by submitting a report of 3,000 to 5,000 words which provides a statement of the research problem and procedure for each research phase (if applicable).
- Faculty of Education requires a 5,000 to 7,000 word progress report and research proposal. Students upgrading from masters to doctoral candidature must produce a more substantial report and research proposal of approximately 10,000 words with extended literature, theory and methodology sections.
- Faculty of Engineering requires a 5,000 to 7,500 word progress report.
- Faculty of Law requires a 1,000 word progress report and an example of the candidate’s written work, negotiated with the supervisor, of up to 7,000 words: for example, a draft chapter from the thesis, a literature review, or a book chapter, article for publication, or conference paper arising from the thesis. For SJD candidates, a thesis outline (minimum 1000 words) should be submitted as well as an example of written work up to 7000 words. The example of written work can include research assignments completed in the coursework component.

Candidates should discuss the departmental and faculty requirements for confirmation/upgrade with their supervisor and/or Graduate Co-ordinator before commencing the written report.

2.3 The review panel and review panel report

A review panel should be convened to discuss with the candidate the written submission and oral presentation, to consider the evidence presented and to make a recommendation in relation to the confirmation of doctoral candidature or upgrading to PhD.

The panel should comprise at least three members:

- the School Graduate Coordinator or nominee (convenor)
- the candidate’s supervisor(s), and
- another member conversant with the general area of research but not directly involved with the candidate's specific project.

This third member may be drawn either from within the department/faculty or from outside it. Where more than one supervisor is present on the review panel, the second supervisor cannot replace the third panel member, who must be independent from the candidate’s research. In these circumstances, a fourth panel member is required. Where more than one supervisor is on the review panel, the decision to confirm candidature should rest with the convenor and the independent panel member. Should the convenor and independent panel member disagree with regard to confirmation/upgrade, the supervisor/s should have the casting vote. Where the decision is not unanimous, this should be detailed in the review panel report. Please note that the oral presentation as viva voce can be incorporated in the review panel meeting. It is expected that members of the review panel will be senior academic staff members with extensive experience in supervising doctoral students.
The convenor of the review panel, who cannot be the candidate's supervisor, should provide a signed report which details the following:

- an assessment of the candidate’s achievements during the period of probationary candidature or masters candidature (in the case of upgrade)
- the panel’s feedback and directions to the candidate
- any changes to the research proposal which are required and if these have been completed
- the panel’s recommendation with regard to confirmation/upgrade.

Chapter 3: Conditions of candidature

3.8 Progress reviews

Supervisors and academic units monitor the progress of doctoral and MPhil candidates throughout their candidature. This is done through a variety of measures such as supervision meetings, review of submitted work and review of presentations. Regular reviews of progress provide the opportunity to ensure that a candidate has the requisite skills and resources to complete their research program within the period of candidature.

Where a candidate and/or supervisor identifies a problem that may affect or has affected the candidate’s progress, the matter should be discussed and a plan for resolution put into place.

Beyond the support and review of candidature that occurs within an academic unit, there are also more formal mechanisms by which progress is reviewed and reported on. Listed below are the mechanisms coordinated by the Research Graduate School Committee. Academic units and/or faculties may have additional requirements.

3.8.1 Annual questionnaire

All doctoral and MPhil candidates are required to complete an annual questionnaire in order to review the conditions of their candidature. The questionnaire provides opportunity for a candidate and their supervisor to:

- review and report on the means by which the candidate meets the conditions of their candidature; and
- to identify and address any issues that may be affecting the candidature.

The questionnaire is completed and submitted separately by the candidate and their main supervisor. Where the responses of the candidate and/or supervisor identify problems with candidature or cause for concern, they will be marked for attention and initiation of an appropriate action plan to rectify the issue, where possible.

Candidates must complete an annual questionnaire in order to re-enrol for the next year of candidature in their research program. If candidates do not complete the questionnaire and consequently fail to re-enrol, their candidature will be deemed to have lapsed.

3.8.2 Academic progress reviews

The academic progress of doctoral candidates is formally reviewed via three candidature milestones:

- confirmation of candidature;
- mid-candidature review; and
- pre-submission seminar.
The mid-candidature review and pre-submission seminar are mandatory requirements for all doctoral candidates who commence their candidature from 1 January 2010 with the exception of those enrolled in:

- the Doctor of Medicine (unsupervised);
- a Staff PhD candidature; or
- a dual-award or joint-badged PhD program (a doctoral program established between Monash and a partner institution); or
- an IITB-Monash research program.

The candidate’s work towards the mid-candidature review and pre-submission seminar is reviewed by an academic panel comprised by at least three members and which includes the main supervisor and another member of staff with experience in research training. Whilst it is preferable that the same review panel oversee all three milestone events for each candidature, ie confirmation, mid-candidature review and pre-submission seminar, it is acknowledged that this may be difficult to achieve. It is consequently recommended that one other member from a previous panel should be involved with subsequent events. The convenor must not be a supervisor of the candidate.

Academic units are encouraged to consider the inclusion of external members on the seminar panels. Such persons may be drawn from other academic units within Monash University or any other suitable tertiary institution or research organisation.

The review panel must provide feedback on the work submitted and presented by the candidate towards the particular milestone and discuss its strengths and weaknesses with the candidate. The panel should also make any appropriate recommendations to assist the progress of the candidate.

### 3.8.2.1 Mid-candidature review

The purpose of the mid-candidature review is to:

- review progress towards the workplan developed on confirmation of candidature and ensure the candidate is “on track” for a timely completion;
- allow the candidate a platform on which to receive useful insights and feedback on their progress and research direction from a panel of experienced academics;
- check that the candidate is developing the appropriate thesis structure, writing and presentation skills required and that original research is being conducted by the candidate in an ethical manner;
- identify additional support structures or programs which may assist with the development of a high quality research project and thesis;
- identify and remedy any difficulties that may impede successful completion of the research project; and
- further enhance presentation skills.

The candidate is required to make an oral presentation at either a departmental seminar and/or a viva voce at which the members of the review panel must be in attendance. The oral presentation must explore at least one aspect of research undertaken to date and note anticipated future directions of the research program. The presentation will normally be followed by time for questions and feedback from the members of the audience. Time should also be allowed for feedback from the panel in a closed session.

The candidate is also required to submit the following to the review panel prior to the oral presentation:

- an accompanying written paper which demonstrates progress by the candidate since confirmation of candidature. This may be a published journal or conference paper, a draft thesis chapter or a prepared paper of an appropriate length to the discipline. This paper should
be of a standard that would be expected for submission at a conference or other public academic event;

- a progress report (minimum of 1000 words) that includes:
  - a summary of the research project, the proposed thesis structure (chapter by chapter outline) and the position of the presented element of the research within project;
  - the timetable for completing the research report/thesis developed at confirmation and a detailed statement of progress towards this workplan and any actual or proposed variations; and
  - identification of any perceived difficulties that are currently or could impede the completion of the project according to the workplan and suggestions to overcome these difficulties.

The mid candidature presentation and review must take place between 21 and 27 months of full-time equivalent candidature following commencement of candidature.

Mid Candidature Review Guidelines for Doctoral Candidates and Review Panel Members

Mid Candidature Review Template

Please note this is a general template only. Please check your faculty as faculty specific versions may apply.

3.8.2.2 Pre-submission seminar

The purpose of the pre-submission seminar is to:

- ensure that the candidate has conducted high quality, independent research;
- verify that the candidate understands and can effectively present the research they have conducted;
- provide constructive feedback from experienced and informed researchers on the near-finished research project;
- provide advice to assist the candidate prepare their thesis for submission; and
- further develop the candidates skills in presenting arguments clearly and effectively.

The candidate is required to present a public seminar to a critical audience which includes a designate review panel. The seminar should:

- provide a summary of their thesis structure and findings; and
- describe, in greater detail, at least one element of their research.

The presentation should normally be followed by time for open questions and then time for feedback to be provided by the review panel in a closed session.

The candidate is also required to submit a thesis summary and chapter outline to the review panel prior to the seminar. The thesis summary should:

- provide a brief overview of the research project and the main findings; and
- a more detailed explanation of the research element presented at the seminar.

The written submission should not exceed 3000 words unless otherwise specified by faculty-specific pre-submission seminar requirements.

The pre-submission seminar should take place no more than 6 months (full-time equivalence) prior to final submission of the thesis.