

# Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

## PhD Committees

### 1. Selection of Confirmation/Supervisory Committee

Within the first six months, students (in consultation with their supervisor) should assemble a PhD Committee. The Committee consists of two or three academic or research staff. Committee members provide additional support and guidance to the student, and should be selected for their ability to complement the strengths of the supervisor and expertise in experimental areas or techniques relevant to the project. At least one Committee member should be external to the Department. A Committee Chair should be selected, the Chair should be a member of the Department. Students are responsible for arranging all meetings and for communicating to the Academic Administrator the approximate time of the meetings.

**Note:** all Committee Meeting forms submitted should be scanned as pdfs and saved as files with the following name format: student number first name last name\_number of months.  
eg. 123456JustineMintern\_24months

### 2. Six Month Meeting Committee Meeting

At approximately six months, a Six Month meeting should be conducted.

Prior to the meeting:

- Students should download and read the Graduate Research Pre Confirmation meeting form. Note that this form may require you and/or your supervisor to fill in information prior to the meeting.  
<http://biomedsciences.unimelb.edu.au/departments/biochemistry/study/department-student-resources>.
- Students are expected to prepare a written report (recommended length 3000-4000 words) that details the hypothesis, specific aims, background and progress in the thesis project. A detailed Project Plan and Timeline must also be included. The report must be circulated by the student to all committee members one week before the meeting. If this report is not received by this deadline, the Committee may cancel the meeting.
- Students must prepare a 30 minute oral presentation that summarises the research project background, hypothesis and aims, together with key data generated to date.

At the meeting:

The Committee officially selects the Chairperson (Chair) who is not the supervisor and is a member of the Department. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the formal reports submitted to the School of Graduate Studies reflect as accurately as possible the state of progress of the

research and any difficulties in the student/supervisor relationship. The Chair is also responsible for alerting the Departmental Research Training Committee if any difficulties arise that cannot be resolved by the supervisor or the Committee.

Students must present a 30 minute oral presentation that summarises the research project background, hypothesis and aims, together with key data generated to date.

Students are expected to discuss and answer questions regarding their research project with the Committee members.

The following issues should be addressed at the Six Month meeting:

- is the research project and aims well defined and achievable?
- are the appropriate methods established or will they need to be developed?
- is the relevant literature being read?
- are there any intellectual property issues?
- are there any occupation, health and safety (OH&S) issues?

The Committee will make recommendations if necessary.

After the presentation of the research project, the student has the opportunity to discuss any issues with their Committee in the absence of their supervisors (who will temporarily leave the room).

The Committee will discuss the student's progress, together with the supervisor, in the absence of the student (who will temporarily leave the room).

The meeting will conclude with the Chair summarising the meeting outcomes to both the student and the Committee. Paperwork will be completed and signed.

After the meeting, it is the responsibility of the student to complete the [6-Month Meeting form](#) and return it to Aradhana Doecki, aradhana@unimelb.edu.au.

### **3. Confirmation Meeting (before 12-month anniversary)**

Students will receive a reminder e-mail regarding their 12 month Confirmation from the Faculty Administrator.

Prior to the meeting:

- Students must download the Confirmation form from the [Graduate Research Hub](#) (<http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/being-a-candidate/reviewing-my-progress>) and bring a hardcopy of the form to the meeting. Note that this form may require you and/or your supervisor to fill in information prior to the meeting. The Chair of the Committee is responsible for ensuring completion of the form at the meeting.
- An updated written report of 3000-4000 words detailing the hypothesis, specific aims, background and progress, together with a detailed Project Plan and Timeline will be circulated by the student one week before the meeting. Students are encouraged to use Turnitin to check the originality of the reports prior to submission. The Turnitin software can be accessed via the Thesis Similarity Checking community, located under 'My

Communities' in the Learning Management System ([LMS](#)). If this report is not received by this deadline, the Committee may cancel the meeting.

- Students must have completed online Research Integrity Online Training prior to Confirmation and present the certificate of completion at the Confirmation meeting. <http://research.unimelb.edu.au/office-for-research-ethics-and-integrity/research-integrity>.
- Students must prepare a 30 minute oral presentation that summarises the research project background, hypothesis and aims, together with key data generated to date.

#### At the meeting:

Students present a 30 minute oral presentation. The oral presentation should include a brief introduction, a statement of the hypothesis and aims, a summary of the experimental approaches and any data obtained so far. The following issues should be addressed:

- are the research project and aims now well defined?
- are the appropriate methods established?
- does the student understand the relevant literature?
- is the student up to date with the relevant literature?
- are there any intellectual property issues?
- are there any current or potential environmental health and safety (EHS) issues?
- is the student making sufficient progress?
- have any milestones been reached, such as the presentation of talks / posters / seminars at lab meetings, the student retreat etc?
- are any issues hampering progress?
- is additional support required?
- is the student attending Departmental seminars?

The Committee will rate the student's proposal and progress against the following criteria:

- demonstrates sufficient oral and written communication skills to make completion likely
- demonstrates the required depth of understanding of the research topic
- is able to place their research in context of the discipline
- demonstrates independence in research planning and execution
- demonstrates technical competence in research activities
- is producing written work and/or its creative equivalent of the required standard
- *(if applicable)* has satisfactorily completed the requirements set by the dept./school/faculty, e.g. prerequisite subjects

The Committee will determine whether the research proposal is appropriate to achieving the graduate attributes for the course.

After the presentation of the research project, the student has the opportunity to discuss any issues with their Committee in the absence of their supervisors (who will temporarily leave the room).

The Committee will discuss the student's progress, together with the supervisor, in the absence of the student (who will temporarily leave the room).

The meeting will conclude with the Chair summarising the meeting outcomes to both the student and the Committee. Paperwork will be completed and signed. The Committee will determine whether the student's candidature should be confirmed. Outcomes of confirmation are: confirmed, extend probationary candidature, issue of a three month formal warning of unsatisfactory progress. The Committee will decide whether the next meeting should be in 12 months or earlier.

#### **4. Interim Meeting(s)**

The Committee may request an oral presentation or progress update by the student at any time during their candidature. The following may be discussed:

- have the issues that prompted the earlier meeting date been resolved?
- have any milestones been reached, such as the presentation of talks / posters / seminars at lab meetings, the student retreat etc?
- is additional support required?

#### **5. Second Year meeting (before 2-year anniversary)**

Prior to the meeting:

- Students must provide a written report detailing the progress since the last meeting and an updated Project Plan and Timeline. The report will be circulated by the student one week before the meeting. If this report is not received by this deadline, the Committee may cancel the meeting.
- Students must download the Progress form from the [Graduate Research Hub](http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/being-a-candidate/reviewing-my-progress) (<http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/being-a-candidate/reviewing-my-progress>) and bring a hardcopy of the form to the meeting. Students should download and read the Graduate Research Pre Confirmation meeting form. Note that this form may require you and/or your supervisor to fill in information prior to the meeting. The Chair of the Committee is responsible for ensuring completion of the form at the meeting.
- Students must prepare a 20 minute (approximately) oral presentation of research progress.

At the meeting:

Students present an oral presentation summarising their progress to date. The meeting should introduce discussions concerning preparation of the thesis and the student's career options.

Other questions and points to be covered may include:

- oral presentation of results
- is the student's progress on track?
- the thesis structure (chapter headings)
- is the literature survey up to date?

- have any intellectual property issues emerged?
- what have been the relevant new findings / advances in field?
- are there any new directions for research based on new findings / advances in field?
- are there any possibilities for collaborative visits to overseas lab(s)?
- have any milestones been reached, such as the presentation of talks / posters / seminars at lab meetings, the student retreat etc?
- has the student attended any conferences
- has the student authored any papers?
- discussion and/or approval of any plans for overseas (conference) trips
- are any visits planned to labs which may offer postdoctoral positions?
- application for travel funds
- discussion of future career and the need to plan during the ensuing year postdoc positions, fellowship applications etc
- are there any issues hampering progress?
- is any additional support required?
- is the student attending departmental seminars?

After the presentation of the research project, the student has the opportunity to discuss any issues with their Committee in the absence of their supervisors (who will temporarily leave the room).

The Committee will discuss the student's progress, together with the supervisor, in the absence of the student (who will temporarily leave the room).

The meeting will conclude with the Chair summarising the meeting outcomes to both the student and the Committee. Paperwork will be completed and signed.

The Committee will determine whether the next meeting should be held at 2.5 years or earlier.

## **6. The 2.5 Year meeting**

**Note:** this meeting is not compulsory, but may be recommended by the Committee at the 2 year meeting.

### Prior to the meeting:

- Students must provide a written report detailing the progress since the last meeting and an updated Project Plan and Timeline. The report will be circulated by the student one week before the meeting.
- Students should prepare a 20 minute (approximately) oral presentation of research progress.

### At the meeting:

Students present an oral presentation summarising their progress to date. This meeting should be especially concerned with the timetable for completion of experiments and writing of the thesis. The meeting agenda will be similar to that of the 23-month meeting, but should also include:

- oral presentation of progress including, presentation of a detailed outline of the thesis and a timetable for completion of laboratory work and writing
- submission of draft of introduction and methods chapters
- assessment of whether the work outlined/completed is sufficient to constitute a thesis, and if not, what additional experiments are needed
- discussion of whether an extension may be necessary
- discussion of any plans for manuscripts
- career plans

After the presentation of the research project, the student has the opportunity to discuss any issues with their Committee in the absence of their supervisors (who will temporarily leave the room).

The Committee will discuss the student's progress, together with the supervisor, in the absence of the student (who will temporarily leave the room). The meeting will conclude with the Chair summarising the meeting outcomes to both the student and the Committee. Paperwork will be completed and signed.

The Committee will determine whether the next meeting should be held at 35 months or earlier.

## **7. The 3 year meeting and any subsequent meetings (at a minimum of 3-monthly intervals)**

Prior to the meeting:

- Students must download the Progress form from the [Graduate Research Hub](http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/being-a-candidate/reviewing-my-progress) (<http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/being-a-candidate/reviewing-my-progress>) and bring a hardcopy of the form to the meeting. The Chair of the Committee is responsible for ensuring completion of the form at the meeting. Students should download and read the Graduate Research Pre Confirmation meeting form. Note that this form may require you and/or your supervisor to fill in information prior to the meeting.
- ***Submission of the 3 year Progress report is a pre-requisite for extension of the PhD scholarship.***
- Students should prepare a 20 minute (approximately) oral presentation of research progress.

At the meeting:

The agenda should include the following activities and questions:

- oral presentation of progress including detailed outline of thesis and timetable for completion and writing
- consensus by the members of the committee that the work outlined/completed is sufficient and satisfactory to constitute a thesis
- what are the plans for manuscripts?
- what career plans have been made?
- have the student submitted at least three seminar reports in the past 12 months?

- Arrangement for the completion seminar (PhD oration) to present the findings of the project

After the presentation of the research project, the student has the opportunity to discuss any issues with their Committee in the absence of their supervisors (who will temporarily leave the room). The Committee will discuss the student's progress, together with the supervisor, in the absence of the student (who will temporarily leave the room). The meeting will conclude with the Chair summarising the meeting outcomes to both the student and the Committee. Paperwork will be completed and signed. The Committee will determine when the next meeting should be held.

Useful Information:

1. [Graduate Research Hub: http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/](http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/)
2. [Graduate Student Association: http://www.gsa.unimelb.edu.au/](http://www.gsa.unimelb.edu.au/)
3. Turnitin software: can be accessed via the Thesis Similarity Checking community, located under 'My Communities' in the Learning Management System ([LMS](https://www.lms.unimelb.edu.au/)) (<https://www.lms.unimelb.edu.au/>)