

Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



The PhD Committee System

1. Induction Meeting

The Department holds an induction session early in the year to ensure that students are aware of the resources, advice and support available to them from within the Department, from the University of Melbourne [Graduate Student Association](#) and from the [Graduate Research Hub](#). Until the Confirmation/Supervisory Committee is formed (before the end of the first six months), the academic administrator and postgraduate coordinator are available to provide both academic and personal support. After confirmation, the Supervisory Committee will assume this role, although the student may approach members of the Postgraduate Committee or the Head of the Department at any time if they have any serious concerns.

Off-campus students and supervisors must also attend the induction meeting, and should take this opportunity to meet with their on-campus supervisor (if appointed) if they have not done so already. In addition to the topics referred to above, issues about authorship and intellectual property should be discussed, because the IP policies of research institutes etc may differ from those of the University. Off-campus students should be assured that the Department is responsible to the University for their welfare, and that any difficulties that cannot be resolved by their supervisor or host institution can and should be referred to the department (via the on-campus supervisor if one is appointed, or via the Department's Academic Administrator, or directly to a member of the Postgraduate Committee).

Academic Administrator

Aradhana Deoki [tel +61 3 83447485, aradhana@unimelb.edu.au]

Postgraduate Coordinator

Assoc Prof Heung-Chin Cheng [tel: +61 3 8344 2254, heung@unimelb.edu.au]

2. Selection of Confirmation/Supervisory Committee

Within the first six months, postgraduate students (in consultation with their supervisor) should invite two or three academic or research staff to serve on their committee. Committee members will provide additional support and guidance to the student, and should be selected not only because the student feels comfortable in approaching them but also for their ability to complement the strengths of the supervisor and expertise in experimental areas or techniques relevant to the project.

At least one, and preferably more, of the committee members should be from the Department. At the first, '6-month' meeting, the committee should elect a chairperson (not the supervisor), who is a member of the Department. The chairperson will be 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 chairperson will also be responsible for alerting the Departmental Postgraduate Committee if any difficulties arise that cannot be resolved by the supervisor or the supervisory committee. The student is responsible for arranging all meetings and for communicating to the Academic Administrator the approximate time of the next meeting.

3. Research Proposal and Meeting

Within the first six months, a written report (recommended length 3000-4000 words) detailing the specific aims, background and progress in the thesis project will be circulated by the student one week before the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting the chairperson will explain the committee's role. The student will then make a brief oral presentation summarising their written report. The committee members may choose to allow the student to finish the presentation before they start asking questions. Some may choose to interrupt the presentation and ask questions related to the preliminary results and the proposal. The following issues should then be addressed:

- are the topic and aims well defined and achievable?
- are the appropriate methods established or will they need to be developed?
- is the relevant literature under control?
- how is the student following the relevant literature?
- are there any intellectual property issues?
- are there any occupation, health and safety (OH&S) issues?

The need for the student to submit Seminar Reports should be discussed. Students are required to submit three seminar reports per year. The report should be scanned by the online text matching software Turnitin and the originality score is submitted together with the reports to their supervisor.

All graduate research students have access to Turnitin via the Thesis Similarity Checking community, located under 'My Communities' when they log into the [LMS](#).

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The committee will then discuss the research proposal with the student and make recommendations if necessary.

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

4. Confirmation Meeting (before 12-month anniversary)

Students will receive a reminder e-mail from the faculty administrator. They should download the progress review and 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. The chair of the committee will need to fill in the form at the end of the meeting.

An updated written report detailing the specific aims, background and progress and 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](#)).

At the beginning of the meeting the chairperson will explain the committee's role. The student will then give an oral presentation based on their written report. The oral presentation should include a brief introduction and a detailed summary of the experimental approach and any data obtained so far. The following issues should then be addressed:

- are the topic 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?
- how does progress compare with that outlined in the proposal document
- 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?

- have the student submitted at least three seminar reports in the past 12 months? Evidence of submission of the seminar reports is required for the student to apply for the departmental support.
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The committee members will determine whether the student's candidature should be confirmed, and whether the next meeting should be in 12 months or earlier.

5. Interim Meeting(s)

The committee may request an oral presentation by the student. In addition, the following questions will 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?

The committee will determine whether the next meeting should be held at the 23-month anniversary or earlier.

6. The 23-month meeting (i.e. before 2-year anniversary)

A written report detailing the progress since the last meeting and an updated Project Plan and Timeline will be circulated by the student one week before the meeting. This meeting should introduce discussions concerning preparation of the thesis and the student's career options. The student should bring to the meeting the completed School of Graduate Studies Progress Report Form which falls due on the 2-year anniversary, and the associated written report. 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/li>

- 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?
- have the student submitted at least three seminar reports in the past 12 months? Evidence of submission of the seminar reports is required for the student to apply for the departmental support.

The committee will determine whether the next meeting should be held at 30 months or earlier.

7. The 30-month meeting

A written report detailing the progress since the last meeting and an updated Project Plan and Timeline will be circulated by the student one week before the meeting. 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

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

8. The 35-month and any subsequent meetings (at a minimum of 3-monthly intervals)

The student should bring to the meeting the completed School of Graduate Studies Progress Report Form which falls due at the 3-year anniversary, and the associated written report. *Submission of this report to the faculty is a pre-requisite for extension of the PhD scholarship.* 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

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/>)
4. The template of seminar reports will be sent to all students at the beginning of each semester.