

THE PHD CALENDAR

Navigating a path to successful completion

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Think ahead, plan backwards

- §1. 0-3months: Establishing the foundations
- §2. Target 1: Confirmation and formal presentation in 12 months
- §3. Keeping it on track — avoiding the mid-PhD doldrums
- §4. Target 2: Two years — two thirds of the way
- §5. Target 3: A first full draft in 33 months
- §6. Thesis submission

Establishing the foundations in first 3 months

The planning period must result in a proposal for the research project that:

1. is clearly expressed;
2. argues for the importance and significance;
3. spells out a methodologically viable approach; and
4. proposes a research plan and timeline, with a realistic commitment.

Don't treat this lightly! It requires time, patience and intensive consultation between you and supervisor(s).

Target 1: Confirmation within year 1

1. Confirmation is a key point in candidature.
2. Its purpose is to determine whether or not a PhD research proposal will result in a high quality thesis completed in the required time.
3. It is also an opportunity to provide feedback and support.
4. By this point substantial progress should be made with the thesis literature review.
5. *If progress is not satisfactory, this is also the time for the difficult decision not to confirm PhD candidature.*

Keep the project on track — avoid the mid-PhD doldrums

doldrums *n. pl.* inactivity; depression; boredom; the regions of the ocean about the equator where there is little wind.

If you relate to this you are not alone.

- ▶ Keep your brain active on the project
- ▶ Keep planning and replanning
- ▶ Keep up regular student-supervisor meetings
- ▶ Keep in touch with a collegial support network
- ▶ Keep persisting in the face of problems with methodology

Signposts of 'risk': less supervision meetings; completing the thesis slips down the priority list; no more writings.

How to thrive:

- ▶ Set mini-milestones and work towards them
- ▶ Avoid the 'I'll soon have time free for my thesis' syndrome

Target 2: Two years — two thirds of the way

- ▶ You are now well over half way through your candidature.
- ▶ Time for major review, reflection, and possibly readjustment.
- ▶ Significant progress should have been made and the final thesis should be taking shape.

Checklist

- ▶ Any paper(s) submitted for publication?
- ▶ Any presentation(s) planned for national/international conference (s)?
- ▶ What are you going to do after your PhD — Getting a job!
How/Where/When?
- ▶ How are your networks?

Target 3: A first full draft in 33 months

The first full draft of the thesis is a major milestone — **the project is nearing completion.**

1. Make sure the thesis is in the correct format from the outset
2. Make sure a completion seminar presentation has taken place
3. Make sure plans for converting the first draft into the final version are in place
4. 80-word summary of your thesis submitted to MSGR
5. Keep going – focus on the final outcomes
6. Convert thesis into papers for publication, if not yet done
7. Write up your CV and find references for job-hunting

Thesis submission

Congratulations!

You made it! Celebrate this great achievement!

... but if you're delayed?

- ▶ Options and Consequences
- ▶ Extensions to candidature and scholarship
- ▶ *1st 6 month extension – The need for a serious look at making progress*
- ▶ *2nd 6 month extension – Successful completion at real risk*
- ▶ Four years is the maximum allowable full-time candidature period.