



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences  
School of Population Health

## ***PhD Completion Seminar Guidelines***

The University requires all PhD candidates to make a public presentation of their research findings within the six months prior to submitting their thesis for examination. The Completion Seminar forms an integral part of PhD candidature. The Completion Seminar is a presentation of the objectives, methods, main findings, conclusions and significance of the candidate's PhD research.

The opportunity to present a Completion Seminar that enables comment from professional peers is timed to allow the student to refine the nuances of the dissertation and strengthen their capacity for presentation of their key arguments and conclusions. It also provides the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate their expert understanding of the research, the requisite presentation and research attributes expected of PhD graduates and ensures equity among PhD candidates in procedures for reporting on their research at the university.

### **The PhD Completion Seminar Panel**

The PhD Completion Seminar panel will comprise a minimum of three staff including the Head of Centre or their nominee, usually the Centre Research Higher Degree Co-ordinator, thesis supervisor(s) and other invitees as appropriate to provide informed comment. While many panels may be wholly internal in membership, external membership of the Panel is also appropriate, and members may be drawn from any suitable tertiary institution/research organisation. Where the candidate has an established advisory committee then this Committee should act as the Panel (but may include additional members). Panel members should be at least broadly knowledgeable about the field of study, and might be expert in some aspect of the research topic. However, they are not required to be expert in the same sense as the thesis examiners, to be familiar with the written work of the candidate, or to have read a full draft of the thesis in preparation for the Seminar. Rather, their role is to provide general feedback on the material as presented to them in the seminar. In many cases it means reconvening the confirmation panel. It will be chaired by a member who is not a member of the supervisory panel. A summary of 500 to 2000 words should be forwarded to the Chair of the research higher Degree Committee and to panel members at least one week prior to the event. The document which could be an expanded version of the abstract to the thesis should provide a brief overview of the scope of the project and its aims, methods, main findings and their significance.

The supervisor should organise a time that is suitable with the student, all supervisors, the Centre's RHD Co-ordinator and any other invited panel members that provides at least three weeks notice of the date to ensure that a suitable venue can be arranged and that other staff, students and interested parties can attend. It is a public event. Students need to provide a brief abstract to the RHD Co-ordinator and the SPH Academic Programs Manager to facilitate publicity of the seminar. Students applying for a six month extension to their candidature can present either before or after they apply for the extension.

### **Format of the seminar**

The public seminar will normally be no less than an hour (including time for questions and feedback from the panel and general members of the audience). Subsequently, the PhD Completion Seminar Panel will meet briefly with the candidate to review the seminar feedback. The candidate's supervisor will complete a brief written report which notes the strengths and weaknesses of the student's work and may identify how particular aspects of the thesis may be enhanced. The student is expected to address these issues prior to the supervisor approving the thesis for submission.

### **Submission of PhD Thesis Form**

Completion of the seminar requirement will be signed off by the supervisor/s and Head of Department on the Completion Seminar section of the *Submission of PhD Thesis: Statement by Candidate, Supervisor and Chairperson of Examiners* form and will include the date and location of the Completion Seminar. Whilst not itself assessable, the Completion Seminar is a hurdle requirement for submission of the thesis.

### **Attendance at the seminar**

The time, title and candidate details should be advertised at School level to encourage attendance by interested persons.