Procedure 2: Requirements of Confirmation of Candidature

1. **OVERVIEW**
Confimation of Candidature is the first major milestone that permits students to move from provisional candidature and commence the research stage of their program.

2. **MINIMUM REQUIRED EXPECTATIONS**
The Academic Board through the Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress rules have established minimum required expectations for Confirmation of Candidature. The School may require candidates to meet additional requirements in order to confirm candidature. The minimum required expectations are listed at the end of this procedure and include completion of a research proposal, presenting a research seminar, completion of some training and induction tasks, and meeting ethics requirements.

3. **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**
3.1 A candidate’s research proposal should contain sufficient information to enable the Associate Dean Research to determine if the candidate is making satisfactory progress, to indicate if they have the capacity to undertake independent research and that the project is achievable within time and budget restraints.
3.2 A research proposal should be a maximum of 10,000 words for a doctoral candidate and 7,000 words for a Master by Research candidate.
3.3 A research proposal should include:
   - the title of the thesis
   - an abstract of 250 words giving an overview of the proposed research
   - an introduction/literature review
   - methods and research questions
   - the likely significance and impact of the research and original contribution that is expected to be made
   - references
   - appendices including a timeline/project plan, project budget, risk assessment, an outline of issues to be addressed in an ethics application (see 5.5), identification of confidentiality or Intellectual Property issues, any special examination requirements.
3.4 Candidates should view the Research Journey - Confirmation of Candidature webpage, and particularly the research proposal reviewer report to understand the criteria their proposal is being assessed against.
3.5 A more detailed description of the content of a proposal is outlined on the Research Journey Proposal Framework webpage.

4. **RESEARCH SEMINAR**
4.1 A candidate will present a research seminar on their proposed research project.
4.2 The seminar should be publicly advertised and provide an opportunity for members of the audience and reviewers to ask questions and provide feedback.
4.3 Where possible, video conferencing or virtual meetings should be used if a reviewer is unable to attend the seminar in person.
4.4 The School will organise a venue and time for the seminar. The School should send details of the seminar to the Graduate Research School in order for the seminar to be promoted on the events calendar.

4.5 Candidates are encouraged to attend the proposal seminars of their peers to gain an understanding of how seminars run in their discipline.

5. ETHICS REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Candidates must comply with the ethics requirements set out in ECU’s Conduct of Ethical Human Research and Conduct of Ethical Research and Teaching Involving Animals policies as well as any relevant State or Commonwealth legislation.

5.2 Candidates must familiarise themselves with ECU’s ethics policies referred to above before commencing their research.

5.3 Candidates must obtain ethics approval where they are proposing to conduct research which involves:
   - human participants;
   - previously collected confidential data; or
   - the use of animals for scientific purposes

5.4 If section (5.3) does not apply, Candidates will be required to submit an ethics declaration.

5.5 Although candidates can not submit their Ethics application until after the proposal has been finalised, they are encouraged to save a working copy in the system. This may then be finalised, when any amendments or recommendations from the proposal review are incorporated. By commencing the ethics application concurrently with the proposal development, any questions or issues raised through ethics management system can be included and addressed in the proposal.

5.6 Retrospective ethics approval cannot be granted, and any research conducted without appropriate approval must not be used in the research or thesis.

6. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

6.1 The written proposal and wherever possible, the research seminar, will be evaluated by a minimum of two reviewers approved by the Associate Dean Research. The role of reviewers is to assess if the project is conceptually and methodologically sound, if the project is an appropriate scope for the level of award, if the research is significant (to the discipline and to the broader community), and if the research is able to make an original contribution to knowledge.

6.2 Reviewers should be free from real or perceived bias with respect to the candidate, supervisor and the student's project.

6.3 The use of at least one external reviewer is encouraged. However, it may be possible, in some cases of critical mass of research expertise within the University, for a School to nominate a review panel internal to the University.

6.4 Proposal reviewers should have academic qualifications equivalent to the level of degree they are assessing. If a reviewer does not have the appropriate qualifications, a case needs be made for including them on the panel, based on significant experience judged to be equivalent.

6.5 The Associate Dean Research will require for each nominated proposal reviewer a statement addressing the suitability of the reviewer to fulfil the role. The statement should include sufficient relevant information for the Associate Dean Research to determine suitability. Examples may include the reviewer’s experience in publishing, supervision, examining theses, and research grants. Other examples may include professional memberships and relevant industry experience. A brief CV should be included (2-3 pages) for each nominated reviewer as evidence against claims in the suitability statement.

6.6 A proposal reviewer may be nominated as a thesis examiner at a later date for the same research candidate, given that they also meet the nomination of examiner requirements.
7. APPLICATION FOR PROPOSAL ACCEPTANCE

7.1 Once the research proposal has been updated to include feedback from reviewers, the candidate should apply for proposal acceptance. This is approved by the Associate Dean Research.

7.2 Candidates are required to complete the Application for Proposal Acceptance and include:

- An amended written proposal that addresses feedback from the seminar and reviewers;
- A statement outlining the changes made, or not made;
- Risk assessment documentation;
- Evidence of completing the online induction;
- Candidate/Supervisor agreement
- Evidence of meeting any special requirements specified at time of enrolment;
- An originality check of the written proposal.

7.3 The Associate Dean Research may only accept the proposal and approve the candidate to continue in the research degree if he or she is satisfied that the candidate has met all the requirements, and proposal amendments have been made to a satisfactory level.

7.4 If the Associate Dean Research does not approve the application for proposal acceptance, the Associate Dean Research will recommend to the Board of Examiners that the candidate be excluded from the course.

8. CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE

8.1 The confirmation of candidature milestone requires meeting all research proposal, ethics and administrative requirements.

8.2 Research Assessments (Student Services Centre) will advise Candidates in writing that they have met all of the requirements, and that they may commence the research component of their program. Candidates may not commence research prior to this notification. Commencing research without the appropriate approval is a serious matter, and will be addressed through the University Rules relating to research and/or academic misconduct.

9. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

The Research Journey, Confirmation of Candidature