

# HDR Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone Seminar Guidelines

The Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone Seminar is a component of the [HDR Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone](#). The Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone Seminar is an event that is designed to identify the capacity of candidates to successfully complete their thesis and make it ready for examination. This milestone should be a presentation of the candidate's work in progress to an expert committee, their peers, and others interested in their research field. The [HDR Pre-completion Evaluation Seminar Template](#) must be used for the presentation.

The Pre-Completion Seminar event will occur in a supportive environment, where there is an expectation that all contributions to the discussion will be respectful in form, and disagreements will be engaged with in a scholarly manner. All participants in the Pre-Completion Seminar process are expected to adhere to the JCU Code of Conduct.

Pre-Completion Seminar milestone provisions require that normally, the candidate presents a public seminar. This requirement means all candidates have opportunities during candidature to present their work orally and to gain feedback and discussion on their research-to-date from their peers. These opportunities are a vital part of developing as a researcher. Participation by staff, students and others at the seminars is encouraged and welcomed to provide a rigorous and informing experience for researchers in development. At the Pre-Completion Seminar, the Candidature Committee and advisory team is also inviting the candidate to discuss the readiness of their thesis for examination, with the Committee in consultation with the team providing quality assurance in preparation for the examination. PCE-FORM-01 must be used to record the Pre-completion assessment. This form must be signed by the candidate and candidature committee. A candidate who is not able to complete Pre-Completion Seminar within the required timeframe (within 3.25 EFTSL for PhD or 1.5 EFTSL for MPhil) must apply for an extension at least one month in advance of that deadline through the College to the Dean, Graduate Research. Normally, a maximum extension of three months may be granted.

## The purpose of the seminar

The process is primarily a formative one, not a summative one. The seminar is primarily aimed at providing a quality assurance step as the candidature reaches a conclusion and the thesis is prepared for submission. It enables the people involved with the candidate's research experience, e.g., academics, peers, industry partners or family members, to engage with the work of the candidate. The goal of feedback is to provide a critique on the work and provide an assessment of the worth and quality of the research as a potentially examinable thesis, accounting for the nature of the research work and its doctoral or masterly qualities and contribution.

## The seminar

The seminar should be presented using the [HDR Pre-Completion Evaluation Seminar Template](#) available on the GRS website. Normally, the Pre-Completion Seminar is open to the public and should be widely advertised to ensure attendance by researchers and research candidates from both within and outside of the College.

The College confirms the Candidature Committee that will attend the seminar and report on the readiness of the thesis for external examination. At least 14 days before the Seminar, each member of the Candidature Committee must receive a copy of a sufficient draft of the thesis that enables the Candidature Committee to provide feedback to the candidate that will assist timely submission of an examinable thesis.

The seminar presentation will usually last between 30 to 40 minutes and will be followed by a question-and-answer session with the seminar attendees. While the presentation must be well-structured and informative, it is unlikely to be an exhaustive presentation of all that is provided in the written document. The Chair will act as facilitator, moderator, and time-keeper to ensure the Pre-Completion Seminar is a formative peer-review event for the candidate.

At the end of the seminar the committee will normally meet separately with the candidate for further discussion and to provide more complete and explicit feedback. This would be expected to take about 30 to 60 minutes and include advice on the recommendations the committee will make, and the changes

expected to the work, if any. The assessment should be recorded on PCE-FORM-01

Where the recommendation is that more than three months (full-time equivalent) is required for thesis revision and/or to place the candidate Under Review, the Candidature Committee should inform the candidate that this recommendation needs to be approved by the Dean, Graduate Research prior to formal implementation. In these cases, the formal notification of the Pre-Completion Seminar outcome should be expedited to the College and the Dean, Graduate Research for approval.

The Committee make a recommendation regarding Pre-Completion Seminar to the Dean, Graduate Research based on their deliberations.

A written summary of critical feedback should be provided to the candidate by the Primary Advisor and a copy attached to the form. If any additional feedback was provided by the Chair and/or Independent Academic, that should also be attached to the recommendation, The feedback should normally be provided to the candidate within one week of the seminar

### **The role of the Candidature Committee**

The committee, and particularly Chair, have responsibility for managing the framework and conduct of the seminar. They ensure sufficient time is given for the candidate to present and for the audience to ask questions. Further, they have a role in ensuring that the peer review, discussion, and scholarly debate of ideas is positive and enabling, and that the rigorous interrogation of ideas does not give way to personal, inappropriate questioning or to criticism focused on the presenter rather than the ideas.

The Committee Chair has a responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with the following policies and procedures:

- The [HDR Requirements](#)
- [HDR Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone Procedure](#)
- HDR Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone Seminar Guidelines (this document)
- Any specific Divisional, College or disciplinary considerations.

Committee Chair duties may include:

- opening and moderating the Pre-Completion Seminar including introducing the Candidate (topic, course, advisory team, and institute affiliation, if applicable) and Committee members.
- advising the format of the event and the Pre-Completion Seminar requirements (e.g., presentation timing, questions from the floor directed by Chair).
  - ◆ The purpose of the seminar is to provide useful feedback and peer review to the candidate.
  - ◆ There is a thesis document that has informed this presentation.
  - ◆ There will be time given to questions at the end of the presentation and that questions should be asked in a constructive and positive manner.
  - ◆ The work presented is a work in progress and will be informed and guided by the feedback provided by the Pre-Completion Seminar process.
  - ◆ The Chair reserves the right to adjudicate to ensure that the session runs smoothly, meets requirements, and keeps to time.
- reiterating that the seminar is a formative experience aimed at supporting preparation of the thesis for submission. Questions should be relevant and reasonable, engaging the student's topic and areas of interest and expertise.
- maintaining appropriate conduct of the seminar in line with peer review and a quality assurance process for thesis submission.
- ensuring the candidate has the opportunity to present their research and receive formative feedback via questions or advice that supports the candidate towards revising the thesis for examination.
- providing advice where questions, or the nature of the questions, are deemed inappropriate.
- appointment of a timekeeper, if appropriate.
- discussing Pre-Completion Seminar procedures and possible outcomes with the candidate.
- guiding Committee members regarding Pre-Completion Seminar procedures and possible outcomes in line with JCU policy and Pre-Completion Seminar guidelines.
- liaise with the candidate in conjunction with the advisory team, prior to seminar, where the committee members have raised concerns about the quality of the thesis for Pre-Completion

- Seminar and readiness for the milestone.
- deciding the final outcome where the committee is split regarding the recommendation to be made.

The committee should review the [JCU Code of Conduct](#) to become familiar with the expectations in terms of behaviour of JCU staff and students in this context. The committee has a responsibility to the candidate and university to seek to ensure that the terms of this code are observed during seminars.

### **Managing sensitive issues**

It should be acknowledged that the point of research studies is to seek to create new knowledge and that this may challenge existing ideas, values, or ideals. Candidates have a responsibility to ensure that sensitive issues are managed with care, giving due consideration to the rights of others.

All participants have a responsibility to listen to the point of understanding and respect contrasting points of view. The spirit of discussion is intended not to encourage the imposition of beliefs but rather the sharing of disparate views and frameworks that may support the candidate in their work.

### **Intellectual Property and/or Confidentiality Agreements**

Where aspects of a candidate's work are subject to Intellectual Property and/or confidentiality agreements, it is for the candidate and supervisor to prepare the presentation in light of these or alternatively notify the faculty and university of any concerns or constraints. In exceptional circumstances, and only with the prior approval of RESC, seminar participation may be restricted and, as appropriate, participants may be asked to sign confidentiality and/or non-disclosure agreements. Where JCU is a party to these agreements, JCU Connect can assist with ensuring appropriate arrangements.

If agreements do not involve JCU, the candidate is strongly encouraged to seek independent legal advice. JCU cannot give guidance in these matters as there is a risk to the candidate that their objectivity may be compromised.

### **Ethical considerations**

Where aspects of the candidate's work or data are subject to ethical clearance provisions, it is for the candidate and advisor to prepare the presentation in light of these. In exceptional circumstances, and only with prior approval of RESC, seminar participation may be restricted. De-identification of sensitive data is the more usual approach to addressing concerns in this context. For further advice on appropriate arrangements, please contact the JCU Connect Ethics team.

### **The Pre-Completion Seminar Process and outcomes**

A key outcome of the process is a recommendation from the Committee to the candidate and advisory team on the readiness of the thesis for submission for external examination.

The Pre-Completion Seminar Committee will review the candidate's progress and proposed thesis for submission and shall submit their recommendations on PCE-FORM-01 via the College to the Dean, Graduate Research. In considering the Pre-Completion Seminar and thesis, the Committee will recommend whether the candidate's thesis is ready for examination.

- the Primary Advisor will provide the candidate with a written summary of critical feedback from the advisory team
- The Chair and/or Independent Academic may also choose to provide written feedback.,
- Comments can relate to, but are not limited to, content, necessary changes to the thesis, discipline style, demonstration of research capacity
- The Committee may recommend provisional completion of the milestone where there are additional requirements to be met that are of a minor nature
- The Committee may, recommend placing the candidate either on Progress Support or Under Review if progress is unsatisfactory, normally for a period of up to three months. At the end of the period, the Chair will advise the Dean, Graduate Research whether the conditions have been met
- Where a candidate's progress remains unsatisfactory after an Under Review period recommended by the Pre-Completion Seminar Committee, the Dean, Graduate Research, on

advice from the College and Chair, shall either grant a further extension of the Under Review Period of up to three months or, terminate the candidature.

In instances where the Candidature Committee cannot come to a unanimous decision, then the majority recommendation should apply. Where the Committee is split regarding the overall outcome, the Chair makes the final recommendation.

Additionally, the Candidature Committee, through the Chair will negotiate with the advisory team and candidate to ascertain a submission date for examination. The submission for examination date is communicated in PCE-FORM-01.

### Related Links

[HDR Requirements](#)  
[HDR Pre-Completion Evaluation Milestone Procedure](#)  
[HDR Pre -Completion Evaluation Seminar Template](#)  
[PCE-FORM-01 Pre-Completion Evaluation Form](#)

### Approval and Modification History

DATE	AUTHORITY	DETAILS
August 2019	Research Education Sub-Committee (RESC)	Refining advice to ensure understanding of purpose and support timely completion.
July 2022	Research Education Sub-Committee (RESC)	Amendment PCE procedure to improve clarity