



Formal Progress Requirements for PhD candidates within the Faculty of Law – Full Time

A PhD is expected to take no less than 3 years full time study.

There are four stages of formal requirements for candidates enrolled in a PhD, where the primary supervision is provided within the Law Faculty.

The first two stages are intended to ensure that the student is making satisfactory progress in the development of the research, that the work is likely to achieve the standard required for a PhD, and that the methodology is appropriate to the aims of the research and practicable. The final two stages are completion requirements.

Stage I: Confirmation requirements

When a PhD candidate enrolls, he or she initially has provisional status and must be confirmed by the University, normally at the end of the first year, in order to carry on with the PhD. The first year is a crucial time for confirming both the details of the research project and that the candidate has the appropriate skills to pursue the PhD to completion. The University PhD Handbook provides at B8:

In order to continue work on the PhD beyond the first year, the candidate must be able to demonstrate the following, as appropriate to the nature of the project:

- Satisfactory endeavour and application
- Ability to conduct a detailed literature search and review
- Acquisition of technical or other practical skills
- Evidence of suitable professional skills
- Firm understanding of methodological and/or theoretical issues
- Ability to communicate clearly, both orally and in writing
- Achievement of any special requirements (e.g. performance in taught papers) set out in the original application

For candidates supervised primarily within the Law Faculty to achieve confirmation, the following must be completed, to the satisfaction of the supervisors:

1) Written paper

The candidate must complete a paper of between 5,000 and 10,000 words within the first year, demonstrating competence in the general topic; a level of analytical skill appropriate to the research; and an ability to write to the standard of a postgraduate thesis. The paper may be, for example, a written literature review or a draft of an important chapter of the thesis.

2) Thesis outline

A detailed thesis outline must be developed, which should include the specific research aims; an overview of the key or necessary arguments to be made; the research methods which will

be used including any requirements for statistical support and ethical approval; and target dates for the various stages of the research. This outline must be presented to the supervisors, any other interested Faculty members, and fellow postgraduate students in a workshop format, within the first 11 months of study, prior to submission of the written outline. The written outline is due by the end of the first year. The workshop is to enable constructive feedback and to facilitate further discussion and refining of the outline with the supervisors prior to confirmation.

If the supervisors are of the view that the paper and/or outline are unsatisfactory, they will recommend against confirmation. The University PhD Handbook provides at B8:

It should be noted that, although we would expect that a large majority of PhD candidates will achieve confirmed status without difficulty, the process is not automatic. If confirmation is not granted, then either provisional admission may be approved for a further period of up to six months or the candidate will be required to withdraw or to register for another degree. If, after a period of extension, admission is not confirmed, the candidate will be required to withdraw or to enrol for another degree.

Key dates:

At 6 months – First Progress Report Meeting

By 11 months – Thesis outline workshop (in person)

By 12 months – Thesis outline submitted

By 12 months – Written paper submitted

At 12 months – Progress Report Meeting (via Zoom if needed)

Stage 2: Seminar

During the second year, the candidate must present their research to the Faculty. Candidates may defend the key arguments of the thesis or present an important draft chapter. This requirement is intended to provide the candidate with experience in presenting research orally and to enable constructive feedback from a group larger than their supervisor/s.

Key dates after confirmation:

24, 36 months – Progress Report Meeting (annual)

By the end of 2nd year - Seminar

Stage 3: Submission of final written thesis

Submission of the written thesis must comply with the relevant University regulations and the PhD Handbook and occur no later than four years from the enrolment date.

Stage 4: Oral examination (for students who first enrolled from 2014 onwards)

The student must complete an oral examination in accordance with the relevant University regulations and the PhD Handbook. The oral examination is normally conducted in Dunedin and the student is expected to attend in person.