PhD Milestones Review Process: Economics Department Guidelines 2015

Associate Professor Gaurav Datt and Professor Lata Gangadharan are the designated milestone coordinators for the PhD Milestone Review Process for the Department of Economics. They undertake this role in collaboration with Professor Pushkar Maitra who is the overall PhD Program Coordinator and Ms Felicity Milne who is the Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Officer.

Three milestones

PhD candidates have the following three milestones to mark the stages of progress during their degrees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MILESTONE</th>
<th>TIMING * *(from commencement date)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commenced between 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Candidature/Progress Review</td>
<td>21-27 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Submission/Final Review</td>
<td>No later than 6 months prior to the enrolment end date</td>
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*Note: The timing does not reflect any extensions of milestones review dates sought and granted to a PhD candidate.

Please note that all three milestones have now become hurdle requirements. This is applicable to all students commencing from 1 January 2015 as well as current students whose milestone is held on or after 1 January 2015.

At each milestone, the university requires a written submission and an oral presentation to be evaluated by a review panel comprising of the panel Chair, which will be Gaurav or Lata, and at least two staff members who work in that research field. Additional person/s can be nominated by the Chair, if needed, including panel member/s external to the University with relevant expertise. As per the new guidelines, no panel member, including the Chair, should be (or have been) directly involved with the student’s specific project, for example, as a current or former supervisor. Thus, while supervisors do not have a formal vote in the decision of the panel, they are given the opportunity and are also expected to provide feedback and contribute towards the panel’s discussions and deliberations. In the Economics Department milestone review panels, the input from the supervisors would be fully utilised as they are in the best position to know and understand their student’s research.

The requirements for oral presentation and written submission are detailed as below.

**Oral presentations as departmental seminars**

The university requirement for the oral presentation at milestones is “a 20 minute presentation” by the PhD candidates on their research progress to date and plans to completion. However, to enable the PhD students to receive richer feedback on their work, as of 2013 the Economics Department has integrated the oral presentation process with the departmental seminars. Thus, oral presentations for all milestones take the form of a seminar by the candidate at one the departmental seminar series. This system has generally worked quite well. As these seminar
presentations are open to anyone else who wishes to attend, the PhD candidates have had the benefit of gaining a wider range of feedback from seminar attendees.

The Department runs several seminar and brown bag series. The series are:

- Monday brown bag
- Tuesday Caulfield brown bag
- Wednesday Department Seminars
- Thursday Applied Microeconomics/CDES brown bag
- Friday Behavioural, Experimental Economics and Theory (BET) brown bag

Milestone seminars will be integrated with these series depending upon availability of open slots in the series in relation to the planned timing of the milestone review, the PhD candidate’s topic of research, and convenience and availability of the candidate and the review panel. While the milestone seminars could be accommodated within any of the seminar series, the preferred option is the **Wednesday Department Seminar** which has the maximum number of open slots given the Department’s decision to organize only four non-milestone seminars under this series over the year.

Ph.D. students would need to contact the coordinators of these series to find a seminar slot that works for them and for their supervisors, the external staff member and the milestone coordinators. More advance notice will facilitate a smoother scheduling and organization of the review process. Information about the seminar series, the seminar coordinators and the slots available can be obtained from the following website: [http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/eco/research/seminars/index.html](http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/eco/research/seminars/index.html).

**Written submissions**

The written submission should be made available to the review panel at least one week prior to the milestone seminar. The nature of the written submission varies with the particular milestone.

**For confirmation review**, the candidate should prepare a report that includes:

- Title of research project/thesis
- Statement of the research problem(s): research question or hypothesis, subsidiary questions, review of relevant literature
- Research methodology: theoretical and conceptual framework, analytical techniques and research design
- Brief bibliography, list of publications produced during probationary candidature (if applicable)
- A statement of progress to date and timetable for completing the research project.

**For mid-candidature/progress review**, the written submission should include:

- A written paper which demonstrates progress by the candidate since confirmation of candidature. This may be a published journal article, a working or conference paper, or a draft paper or thesis chapter. This paper should be of a standard that would be expected for submission at a conference or other public academic event.
- A progress report that includes: (i) a summary of the research project, the proposed thesis structure (chapter outline) and discussion of how the mid-candidature paper fits into the thesis structure; (ii) the timetable for completing the research project and a detailed statement of progress, including any actual or proposed variations to the timeline proposed at confirmation; and (iii) identification of any difficulties that are impeding or could impede
successful completion of the research project, and any suggested steps to overcome these difficulties.

For pre-submission/ final review, the submission should include:

- A written paper which describes, in detail, at least one element of the candidate’s research project, and locates it within the overall thesis structure and its key findings
- A progress report with (i) a chapter outline and thesis summary which should provide a brief overview of the research project and the main findings, (ii) the plan to submission with a timeline.

This is just a summary of the milestones review process. For further details, please refer to chapter 3 on Conditions of candidature in the Handbook for Doctoral Degrees:
http://www.monash.edu.au/migr/research-degrees/handbook/content/

Please do not hesitate to contact the milestone coordinators for any further queries on the milestones review process.