



Higher Degree Research Milestone information

Confirmation of Candidature



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This information is for HDR students enrolled in the **College of Science and Engineering** and their supervisors and outlines the College specific requirements and processes for the HDR Milestones. This information can be used in conjunction with the [Office of Graduate Research webpage](#) and the [HDR Policies and Procedures](#)

Milestones are a compulsory part of HDR candidature and are required to be completed by HDR students and their supervisors regularly (usually annually) based on the students individual HDR timeline. This process is to ensure that HDR students have an opportunity to highlight and track their HDR achievements, professional development completed and to plan the next 6 or 12 months of candidature. Milestones are a snapshot of a point in time to assess if HDR students are progressing at an appropriate rate for their stage of candidature and effectively working towards a timely completion of their degree.

1. Milestone Requirements

There are three parts to every major milestone; a presentation, an interview with a **Thesis Milestone Panel**, and the online milestone form in [Inspire](#) which requires the submission of written work. Students must complete the preparation of written work, a presentation & interview component before finalising the online form and all parts should be completed before the milestone due date.

Each milestone review requires an evaluation of progress, an assessment of the student's written work, and an assessment of the student's oral communication via a seminar or similar [*Note: Interim Milestones do not require an oral presentation*]

To complete the milestone students will require the following mandatory materials:

- **Written Work** - for example Literature Review & Research Proposal (for Confirmation of Candidature(COC) or draft Literature Review & Research Proposal for Interim Pre-COC), Draft Chapters or Papers or copies of published work (Mid Candidature and Interim Reviews) or Draft Full Thesis and/or copies of published work (Final Thesis Review & Interim Post Final Thesis Review)
- **Turnitin Report** in accordance with the Academic Integrity Policy (Access HDR Turnitin box via the REST FLO site – self enrol via the <https://flo.flinders.edu.au/course/view.php?id=49767>)
- **Evidence of Oral Presentation with Assessors Reports** – (further information in Oral Presentation section below) Presentation must be completed and written feedback from assessors needs to be uploaded into [Inspire](#) by the Student.
- Copy of relevant **Ethics Approval**
- **Completion Plan** – a plan must be uploaded into [Inspire](#). The OGR has templates available the [completion plan document](#) at the end of this document or [GANNT planning chart](#)

For each milestone, the student and supervisor must complete the necessary forms through [Inspire](#). HDR students must complete and upload all requirements of the milestone **before signing off** on the milestone form in [Inspire](#), supervisors **do not** have the ability to upload documents into milestones. Students should not sign off on their milestone until they have presented work to their assessors, and have assessor's comments to upload to [Inspire](#).

2. Assessors

In the first 6 months of candidature, each student in the College of Science and Engineering will be assigned a **Thesis Milestone Panel**. This panel will consist of the Principal Supervisor and Associate Supervisors and two independent assessors. It is the responsibility of the **Principal Supervisor** to work with the HDR Academic Advisor in their discipline area or the College HDR Coordinator to nominate these two assessors who would ideally stay with the student until the completion of their PhD thesis. One of the assessors may be the HDR Academic Advisor or College HDR Coordinator but this is not a requirement. When selecting assessors please consider the following:

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- (i) Assessors must be free from real or perceived bias, either for or against the candidate, or the supervisor or the project. They may be a member of staff or have adjunct status at Flinders University or another tertiary institution (e.g. Uni of SA or Uni of Adelaide, or SAHMRI or SARDI). They must be available to attend the student's presentations and meet with the student at the assessment panel meetings which will be held after the oral presentations at Confirmation of Candidature, Mid-Candidature and Final thesis milestone points
 - (ii) Assessors will be knowledgeable in the discipline and will be research active, thus ensuring that their knowledge of the field or area of professional practice is current. Namely, they should meet the requirements for registration as a supervisor at Flinders
(<https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/staff/policies/academic-students/hdr-supervisor-procedures.pdf>)
 - (iii) Assessors must hold a qualification equivalent to or higher than the degree for which the thesis is being examined, or possess equivalent professional experience as determined by the College HDR committee
 - (iv) Assessors will have empathy with the theoretical framework used by the candidate;
 - (v) Assessors will be made familiar with the requirements of Flinders University, and the essential parts of the Course Rules governing the particular degree
(<https://www.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/documents/staff/policies/academic-students/higher-degrees-research-policy.pdf>)

It is expected that all research active academic staff in the College will be an assessor on at least two student HDR Milestone panels. These commitments would last for 3 to 4 years. No staff member should need to be an assessor for more than 6 students at any one time, and two Confirmation of Candidature panels per year.

3. Oral Presentation (Major Milestones)

For each milestone review, the **Principal Supervisor** will arrange a milestone review session with the members of the **Thesis Milestone Panel** (as outlined above). Note that the panel for each review must consist of a minimum of 3 academics. This milestone review session should be arranged well before the due date of the Milestone in [Inspire](#).

- Panel members will receive all documentation at least two weeks before the scheduled review session (including the literature review/research proposal for Confirmation of Candidature and thesis chapters for later milestones) from the principal supervisor or student via email.
- Students must include the Turnitin Report in documentation provided to the panel in accordance with the Academic Integrity Policy.
- The student and/or principal supervisor will arrange for the student to give an oral **presentation (20 to 30 minutes)**. This can be a one off talk, part of a regular seminar session within a research centre or at the College Annual HDR conference if appropriate. The presentation will be open to other students and staff in the College.
- Directly following the presentation there will be a question time with the panel and other attendees of the presentation. The student should be prepared to answer questions in front of the College academic community, followed by a private interview with the **Thesis Milestone Panel**.
- **For Confirmation of Candidature only** - It is strongly encouraged to have the College HDR Coordinator or a College HDR Academic Advisor at both the oral presentation, question time and the interview. If present they will Chair the meeting. The last stage of the oral presentation is the interview. In some extraordinary cases after the presentation and question time, it may be clear that the student is ready to be confirmed and no interview is necessary. In most cases it is expected that the student will meet with the HDR Milestone panel for 15- 30 minutes. The assessment panel should be conducted such that the assessors are provided with an opportunity to meet with the student and the supervisor/s

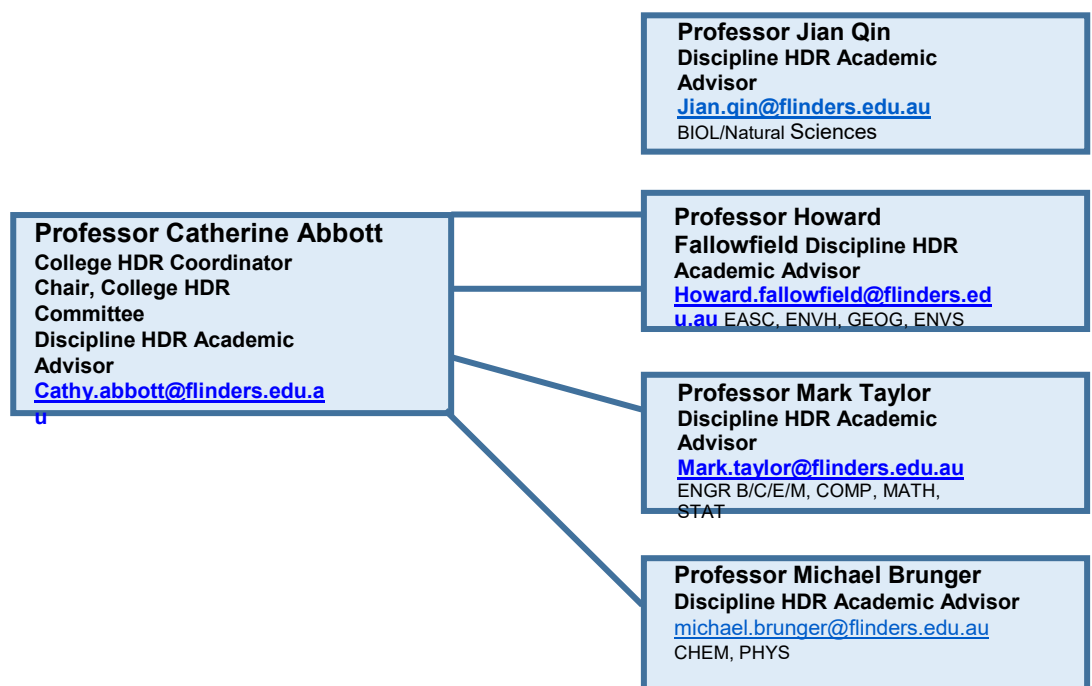
individually and together. This interview can take place directly following the presentation or it may be necessary for it to occur 1 to 2 weeks later e.g. if the talk is at the CSE HDR conference. This interview is an opportunity for the student and supervisor to air any unresolved issues and it is a mentoring opportunity for both student and supervisor.

The **Thesis Milestone Panel** must decide whether the student should be allowed to proceed with their studies as intended, or if modifications to their research program may be necessary. In general, the panel will choose from one of the following recommendations:

1. **Continuation of Candidature** - The student's progress is satisfactory, and they should continue with their studies, or, in the case of a Confirmation of Candidature, they should begin their research program as proposed (subject to minor revisions if necessary).
2. **Upgrade to PhD** (if currently a Masters by Research) – This option is only used at the Interim Pre- Confirmation or Confirmation of Candidature Milestone, if the student has demonstrated that the project has the scope and scale required of a PhD and the student is capable of completing a PhD in the expected duration of candidature. Student and supervisor will also be required to complete the 'Degree Transfer or Significant Change to Project' form in [Inspire](#).
3. **3 Month probationary period to resubmit the milestone:** The student's progress is At Risk or significant modifications to the research program are necessary. The student may be asked to submit a revised draft, revised chapters, or a revised literature review/research proposal, as the case may be, and /or deliver another presentation within 3 months.
4. **Downgrade to Masters** (if currently a PhD student) - student and supervisor will also be required to complete the 'Degree Transfer or Significant Change to Project' form in [Inspire](#).
5. **Recommend Show Cause Proceedings** - The student's progress is unsatisfactory. The student may be asked to Show Cause why their candidature should not be terminated or transferred.

Once the presentation, question time and interview have been concluded the student will be provided with written feedback on the assessors form. The student will need to upload their assessor's comments to [Inspire](#). The student then needs to complete and sign off the Milestone form in [Inspire](#), the Supervisor will review and sign off and finally the College HDR Coordinator (or HDR Academic Advisor) will confirm the recommendation through [Inspire](#).

The student will get a notification from Inspire with details of the HDR Coordinators recommendation and a link to view their completed milestone.



CSE Confirmation of Candidature Research Proposal Guidelines

1. **Provisional Title:** Be concise and informative (<20 words).

2. **Abstract:** Describe the broad area of your research, clearly state the objectives, knowledge gaps, research need and how you will achieve them (200-300 words).

3. **Table of contents:** Shows the organisation of the text. Helps orientation.

4. Introduction

The Introduction provides an overview of your research project providing the reader with a broad background for why the topic is important; a statement either in the form of a hypothesis, a research question, or project statement; and provide a clear outline what the reader can expect in the main body of your proposal.

- Why you are writing this topic review
- Why the topic is important
- The scope of the review — what aspects of the topic will be discussed
- The criteria used for your literature selection
- The objectives of the literature review
- The organisation of the review (logically link the aims together).

5. Critical Review of the Literature

A literature review is a critical analysis of published literature on a particular topic. It is an assessment of the literature and provides a summary, classification, comparison and evaluation. A good literature review should identify an appropriate research question, find evidence to establish the need for the proposed research, establish your thesis in the chain of research in your field, show your assessors your familiarity with important research in your field and demonstrate your critical understanding of theory.

Each body section should deal with a different theme that is outlined in the introduction.

You will need to synthesise several of your readings into each paragraph, so that there is a clear connection between the various sources. You will need to critically analyse each source for how they contribute to the themes you are reviewing.

- Use subheadings to organize the writing
- Use literature to support your arguments

The review of literature should lead to the unanswered questions or knowledge gaps in your field, providing the opportunity for you to clearly state the objectives of your research. The reader should be able to recognise how your research will make a signification and original contribution to your research field.

6. Research Objectives and Approach

This section of your proposal should build on the background of your innovative research and describe the theoretical framework and methodological approaches you will use to answer your research questions. It should clarify the research objectives and provide the reader with a sense that you have a solid understanding of the methodologies and why they provide the best and most valid approach to your research.

Other aspects you may include are

- The materials you will require
 - Data analysis tools and programs
 - Equipment you intend to use
 - Suggested research proposal organisation
- The research proposal can be organised into different thesis chapters.
- Chapter X
Research questions
Introduction

- Provide further background to justify the need to address research questions.

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- Aims

Methods, materials, data analysis

Details of any statistical advice that has been received

Expected outcomes and significance

7. Summary of research completed in the last 12 months

Provide any written work or data you have collected and analysed during your PhD. This section may include graphs or figures.

8. Professional Skills Development

Summarise any other education and/or training opportunities you have participated in. Have you attended any local, national or international conferences, or do you have plans to do this in the next 12 months.

9. Thesis completion plan

Where possible provide a Gantt chart with the specific milestones and timelines of your research project. This should reinforce to the reader that your scientific approach is sound and relevant to the outcomes of the project with deliverables in the 3 year timeframe of your PhD project. While not all research projects have specific and detailed experimental or theoretical plans from day one, they should have a description of the main scientific questions and approaches you will use for each of them.

10. Resources

Do you require access to any special research facilities that are subject to successful access grants (e.g. synchrotron access, ANSTO, characterisation methods, High Performance Computing).

11. Ethics clearance (if applicable);

- a. Animal
- b. Human Clinical or Behavioural Ethics,
- c. Institutional Biosafety Committee or Quarantine (AQIS) approvals
- d. or any SA or other government approvals/permits that your project may require

12. IP agreements (if applicable)

13. Summary

- The summary should include details that correspond to the objectives outlined in the introduction.
- Identify the main arguments in the literature review.
- Discuss your overall perspective on the topic.
- Define the significance of your work. What is the original contribution?
- State the knowledge gaps or areas for further research.

14. References

A bibliography or reference list for what you have written should be provided. It is suggested that you use a Author Date referencing system such as Harvard, as this makes it easier for assessors to see whether you are citing important work in the field, and what work has been previously been done by your Supervisors group in this area.

Further advice and information:

- <https://students.flinders.edu.au/my-course/hdr/milestones/confirmation-of-candidature>
- This Research Proposal document including the literature review, should be approximately 10,000 (PhD) and 5,000 (Masters) words.
- You should send regular drafts of this document to your supervisors for advice, editing and approval well before the COC deadline.

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- Once the document has been approved by your supervisors it should be send to the two assessors at least two weeks before the oral presentation and interview.
 - It is the student's responsibility to send this document to their assessors.
 - The Confirmation of Candidature Form (attached) will be used by the assessors to assess your written and oral components of this milestone
 - Before your oral seminar and interview, please make sure you have completed and answered all of the questions in INSPIRE, but do not sign off on until you have presented your seminar and had your interview.

What information do I need to gather/complete in INSPIRE

Information on the questions presented in INSPIRE and advice on how to answer these is provided below.

- *What have you achieved in the last 12 months of your candidature (i.e. chapters completed, conference presentation, publications)* – This section can be copied from Q7 and Q 8 in your proposal document.
- *Please provide ethics application/approval details* -This section can be copied from Q11 in your proposal document. You should include the approval number if relevant and the date of approval in your answer to this question.
- *Please upload supporting documentation e.g. ethics confirmation letter.* If you do not have a copy of this approval, please ask your supervisor for this information and upload a copy into INSPIRE.
- *Please upload your draft chapters or draft research proposal* - This is where you should upload your proposal document containing your literature review. If you already have draft chapters or paper drafts, please upload these as well.
- *Please upload your TurnItIn report for your draft chapters or draft research proposal* - The documents in the previous question should be submitted to the *TurnItIn* draft box found in the HDR FLO site and the report should then be uploaded into INSPIRE.
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- *Please provide the details of your completed oral presentation for the Confirmation of Candidature Review. You must complete your presentation before signing off on your milestone in INSPIRE* – You should provide information here about the date and location of your oral presentation. You may also want to comment on how you think it went and whether there is a need for improvement.
- *Upload your independent assessor's comments (if applicable)*- You need to discuss this with your supervisor and recruit two independent assessors to your thesis panel. These assessors should remain with you for your entire PHD. Please make sure they are provided with the forms to assess your written proposal and your oral presentation. A copy of the completed forms needs to be uploaded to INSPIRE, before you and your supervisor can sign off on this milestone. The discipline and HDR coordinators will use this information for final assessment of this milestone.
- *Have you identified an appropriate research methodology and type of data collection (or equivalent) and articulated how it will be employed in your project?* Yes, is not an acceptable answer here. Further details are required eg. you can briefly explain your methodology or methods you have chosen or refer to Q6 in your proposal.
- *Is the research project viable and achievable for the degree in which you are enrolled?* Yes, is not an acceptable answer here, you need to articulate why it is. Include information on how it will be achievable in 3 years.
- *Has there been an agreement about the [attribution of any papers](#) which may be published and presented as a result of the research?* Yes, is not an acceptable answer here. Make sure you have discussed authorship with your supervisor, and you have agreed on this. If you provide details of this agreement as an answer to this question, and your supervisor then signs your milestone you then have evidence of this agreement. You should read the authorship guidelines in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) to assure that what you have agreed to meets this code.
- *Have you applied for Research Student Maintenance?* For all students in our college the answer to this question should be yes. In 2020, the College of Science and Engineering at the commencement of your candidature allocated your Research Students Maintenance, \$4000 for PhD students and \$2000 for Masters students into your Primary Supervisors RSM student account. You do not need to apply for these funds. These funds are for your entire candidature and can be used for research consumable costs, field trip costs, to purchase a lap or desk top

computer, software, and conference travel. Please discuss with your supervisor the best use of these funds to enable successful completion of your PhD.

- *Do you have any concerns regarding your candidature?* Please avoid just stating yes or no, please provide a few words of explanation for the answer given.
- *Do you have any concerns regarding your candidature that you would like hidden from your Supervisor(s)?* If you choose to complete this question your comments will be seen by the College HDR Coordinator or College HDR Academic Advisor and the Office of Graduate Research Progression Team to assist you in resolving the concerns.
- *Have you completed the Skills Needs Analysis in Inspire?* The answer to this question should be Yes. If you have not done this at this stage you should try to complete before completing the COC interview, as the results may be discussed during this meeting.
- *Looking at your list of completed activities, please discuss what skills you have acquired through these activities under the four RDF Domains, whether you have met all your set skills development goals since the last review period, and how you have applied the skills you have gained.*
 - Domain A: Knowledge and intellectual abilities
 - Domain B: Personal effectiveness
 - Domain C: Research governance and organisation
 - Domain D: Engagement, influence and impact
- You should try to write some comments to each of these four domains, this is a good opportunity here for you to recognise the skills you have gained and those that you need to develop further.
- *Reflecting on your current skills needs and ultimate career goals, what aspect of research and career development training would you like to focus on for the next review period?* At this early stage of you PHD, you should have already had discussions with your supervisors regarding your career plans. Your supervisor should be able to suggest some options for training now and in future and also may be able to help you place training or any other activities that you have completed already into the four domains above.
- *Do you require additional education and/or training to ensure timely completion by your recorded submission date?* Your supervisor should be able to help you identify opportunities, especially if you let them know what skills you would like to develop. They also may have their own suggestions, via their own networks that would be helpful.
- *Have you undertaken industry engagement activities?* Please articulate any industry engagement that you have been involved in. Is an industry partner involved in your project, are you trying to address an industry problem. Maybe they are funding your project.
- *What do you plan to achieve in the next 12 months of your candidature?* This information should come from Q 9 in your proposal and from the Completion Plan below.
- *Are you on track to submit by your expected work submission date?* We are looking for more than a yes or no response here, please justify your answer with details.
- *Please upload your Completion Plan* The information in this plan could form part of the answer for Q9 in your proposal, it may be a Gantt chart or it could be a table outlining details of the chapters of your thesis mapped to years/months. See the file at the end of this document.
- *Are the data/primary materials recorded and stored in a format that complies with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)?* It is very important that you read this code. When reading this code special attention should be played to the information on supervision, Authorship and Data Storage and Collection
- *Please elaborate how and where the data/primary materials are recorded and stored?* It is important to provide sufficient details here so that you supervisor would be able to find your data if required.

Confirmation of Candidature Assessment Form

Candidate's details				
Name:				
Award	PhD:		Masters:	
Study mode	Internal:		Part-time:	
Thesis Title/Area:				
Enrolment date:			Date of panel review:	
Assessor's Name			External/Internal	

Please add any additional Comments/Advice that you would like to offer the Candidate/Supervisor:

ASSESSOR SIGNATURE:

Criteria for Confirmation of Candidature assessment	Improvement/ Discussion needed	N/A	Yes
The candidate demonstrates a sound grasp of the context of their research (i.e literature in their field)			
Is the overall research proposal feasible with the 3 year time frame?			
Are the research aims and questions appropriate and articulated clearly?			
Is the overall research proposal indicative of research that will make a “significant and original contribution to the field”?			
Is the scope of the research appropriate for the degree?			
A summary of work completed during the past 12 months (FTE) has been provided			
Are the writing skills at an appropriate standard for HDR work (ie evidence of synthesis and critical thinking rather than just descriptive)			
Are the oral presentation skills at an appropriate standard for HDR work			
Are draft timelines/ research plan up to date, realistic and achievable by the 3 yr expected work submission (EWS) date? **			
Are the research design and methods appropriate to the project and clearly communicated?			
If relevant, has statistical advice been sought and the approach planned?			
Are candidate and all members of the supervisory team meeting regularly?			
Has the student’s engaged in the development of professional skills that complement their thesis research project and match their career goals?			
Have ethical issues associated with the research been considered and approval applied for or granted? Human Ethics Animal Ethics Institutional Biosafety Committee			
Have State or Government Permits that are required for the research been granted			
Does the project require access to specialised facilities (e.g. synchrotron access, ANSTO, characterisation methods, High Performance Computing)?			
If access to specialised facilities is not granted or funded, is there an alternative plan for the experiments?			
Have IP issues been identified and addressed?			
Overall research proposal accepted? If relevant, please indicate below what conditions have been applied.			

** The expected work submission (EWS) date is when you are expected to submit your thesis and the Funding Expected Completion (FEC) date is when the government funding for your candidature ends, and you will be charged fees for continuing candidature. For students that enrolled 2018 onward the EWS has been set at 3 years, and the FEC date is at 4 years, so students should be planning to complete their thesis by the 3 year EWS date.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Confirmation of Candidature writing (Literature Review/Research Proposal) and oral presentation should be viewed in a holistic manner, these criteria should be viewed with some flexibility and adaptability

After the assessor completes this form, they should hand their comments or email an electronic version of the form to the student, Discipline HDR Advisor and/or College HDR coordinator and supervisor. The student should then upload the forms to their INSPIRE COC milestone where it asks for assessors comments.

The Thesis Milestone Panel/HDR coordinator will utilise this assessment form to decide whether the student should be allowed to proceed with their studies as intended, or if modifications to their research program may be necessary. In general, the panel will choose from one of the following recommendations:

1. **Continuation of Candidature** - The student's progress is satisfactory, and they should continue with their studies, or, in the case of a Confirmation of Candidature, they should begin their research program as proposed (subject to minor revisions if necessary).
2. **Upgrade to PhD (if currently a Masters by Research)** – This option is only used at the Interim Pre-Confirmation or Confirmation of Candidature Milestone, if the student has demonstrated that the project has the scope and scale required of a PhD and the student is capable of completing a PhD in the expected duration of candidature. Student and supervisor will also be required to complete the 'Degree Transfer or Significant Change to Project' form in Inspire.
3. **3 Month probationary period to resubmit the milestone:** The student's progress is At Risk or significant modifications to the research program are necessary. The student may be asked to submit a revised draft, revised chapters, or a revised literature review/research proposal, as the case may be, and /or deliver another presentation within 3 months.
4. **Downgrade to Masters (if currently a PhD student)** - student and supervisor will also be required to complete the 'Degree Transfer or Significant Change to Project' form in Inspire.
5. **Recommend Show Cause Proceedings** - The student's progress is unsatisfactory. The student may be asked to Show Cause why their candidature should not be terminated or transferred.

HDR COMPLETION PLAN

Student name: _____

Student Number: _____

Thesis Title: _____

Chapter Number	Chapter Title	Chapter Focus (eg What is the role of this chapter in the thesis? Is this a data analysis chapter? Or is it a case analysis or a literature review chapter?)	% of Chapter completed	Stage of Chapter (notes, first draft, tables to add, final draft etc)	What is left to complete and how long you anticipate it will take	Month

KJ:SM July 2017

