FBE Guidelines: Protocol

Protocol is a formal process to review HDR candidates’ research progress and plans for completion. In most cases, Protocol takes place after 6 months of full-time equivalent study. The purpose of Protocol is to:

- assess the feasibility of the project in terms of direction, scope and planning
- ensure the proposed research is sufficient to warrant the award at completion
- evaluate progress to date and the preparedness of candidates to complete their degree within the time limit of 3.5 years full-time study
- provide the candidate with an opportunity to demonstrate academic writing and presentation skills appropriate for doctoral study
- create an opportunity for feedback from a panel of experienced academics outside the supervisory panel
- review academic development and support provided by FBE to the candidate
- identify additional supervision, training, or technical support needed for the next stage of research.

Protocol Procedure
The HDR candidate prepares:

- A written document between 3,000 and 10,000 words providing an overview of the entire HDR project including information on timelines and budget (refer to following section on Structure of the Protocol Document). The academic writing should be of the standard for a peer reviewed publication.
- An originality report from Turn It In. This program will check for evidence of plagiarism. Each candidate is set up with a Turn It In account and is notified about the login and password by email from the faculty office. Link: http://www.mq.edu.au/iLearn/student_info/assignments.htm#turnitin
- A 20 minute oral presentation summarizing the written Protocol document and supported by a PowerPoint presentation of no more than 12 slides. The presentation should be of the standard for an academic conference.

One week before their scheduled Protocol presentation, the HDR candidate submits their written work and the Turn It In report to each member of the Protocol Panel which is formed for the purpose of assessing the written submission and presentation and providing feedback to the candidate. The Panel comprises the Head of Department (or nominee), Departmental HDR Coordinator, Principal and Associate Supervisors. The AD HDR, HDRM and other academics from the department may also attend by invitation. The candidate may request that the Departmental HDR Coordinator sends an invitation to other academics and HDR students for the presentation.

The candidate presents their proposed HDR project to the Panel. The candidate should allow approximately 20-30 minutes for the presentation and 20-30 minutes for questions from the Panel. Upon completion of the oral presentation and question time, the candidate is asked to leave the room. The Panel members then discuss the merits of Protocol and make a progression recommendation.
The Chair of the Protocol Panel writes a formal report summarising the strengths, achievements and development needs of the candidate. In the report, the Chair also gives suggestions for successful and timely completion. The report states whether the outcome of the Protocol is deemed Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. If the outcome is Satisfactory, candidature may be confirmed at that point (note: some coursework requirements may delay confirmation). Candidates whose progress is deemed Unsatisfactory by the Panel are informed in writing of any extra work they are to undertake. A time limit of 6 months is set for the completion of this requirement. Failure to achieve a satisfactory result within a 12 month (FTE) time frame (from the candidate’s commencement date) will result in the candidate being asked to explain why their candidature should not be terminated.

Structure of the Protocol Document

The written Protocol document consists of the following components:

- Overview of the entire HDR project
  - identification of the key research problems/ issues
  - justification of the significance of the problems / issues
  - impact from academic / industry / community perspective(s)
  - identification of the scope and direction of the research
  - thesis format: by publication or traditional
  - number of studies / papers proposed
  - thorough and clear review of relevant literature
  - identification of particular gaps in the existing literature
  - description of theoretical framework(s) informing the overall project and / or specific studies
  - where appropriate: presentation of research model(s) and hypotheses / propositions

- Research design showing how the problems identified will be addressed:
  - outline and justification of the method(s) chosen
  - description of data collection including sampling, measures and method of administration
  - identification of appropriate analytical technique(s)

- Timetable, detailing the following information:
  - plan of research, including timeline to completion
  - identification of resources and skills needed to complete the research project and when they should be acquired

- Budget prepared on approved form:
  [Link](http://www.businessandeconomics.mq.edu.au/faculty_docs/hdr/Copy_of_HDR_Candidature_Budget._payment_instructions_and_forms.xls.xlsx) If approved, the budget document will be signed by the Panel during the Protocol. Candidates are required to submit the approved budget to the HDR Administrator.
  - Budget must not exceed $10,000 allocated by FBE and an additional $5,000 from a successful competitive PGRF application for the entire HDR candidature, detailing costs of:
- skill development activities (e.g. specialist training, attendance at external analytical workshops)
- data collection / field work (e.g. purchase of databases, printing, postage, transcription, research assistance)
- equipment such as software or hardware
- thesis production (e.g. editing, printing, binding)
- conference registration fees and travel

The candidate must obtain confirmation from the Principal Supervisor that the proposed research can be completed within the budget and that the estimates provided are reasonable.