

**Procedure for upgrade from MSc to PhD  
October 2009**

**Timeline for upgrade application**

<b>Approximate time</b>	<b>Action: Student</b>	<b>Action: Supervisor/Committee</b>
First Semester 1 of MSc candidature: Three months after commencement	Preliminary meeting with supervisor and assoc. supervisor : Discuss criteria for upgrade recommendation	Supervisor sends letter to PG Coordinator (Admissions) outlining criteria
One month before end of 2nd Semester of MSc candidature (and no earlier than end of 1st Semester)	Submit 3000-5000 word report to PG Coordinator with copies to upgrade committee (supervisor, assoc. supervisor, nominated reader)	Supervisor sends letter to PG coordinator commenting on application and nominating third reader
Year 2 of candidature: Early February (for Sem. 1 upgrade) or Late June (for Sem. 2 upgrade)	Arrange meeting with committee	Chairperson (PG Coordinator, Admission) completes upgrade report form with recommendation and sends copy to student
		PG Coordinator sends the Faculty Application form to Faculty with the School's recommendation

Note that these procedures apply to Research-only Masters candidates. A separate set of procedures apply to DCP students seeking to to upgrade to PhD: for further details contact the Clinical Psychology Unit.

**1. Applications for upgrade of candidature from MSc to PhD should be submitted to the Postgraduate Coordinator (Admissions), and should include:**

- a. A 3000 - 5000 word report of the research project, comprising:
  - a brief literature review and rationale for the project
  - a description of progress to date (including methods, data collected and any results to date)
  - a plan for proposed future research
  - a clear indication of how the proposed research extends beyond the Masters level and therefore merits an upgrade

Note that the First Year Progress report may be used as a substitute for this report (see Point 6 below).

- b. A statement of number of number of semesters of credit sought from the Masters candidature (normally full credit is given for all completed semesters)

- c. A completed Science Faculty “Application for Upgrade to Doctor of Philosophy” form: Go to <http://www.science.usyd.edu.au/cstudent/pg/forms.shtml>

**2. To be approved for upgrade to PhD, the candidate must meet the following criteria:**

- Substantial progress has been made with the research project
- The research shows PhD quality
- The proposed research is feasible
- The proposed extension of the MSc research is sufficiently substantial for a PhD
- The project can be completed within the normal period
- The application shows sufficient conceptual grasp of the topic

**3. Upgrade committee.** The application is assessed by a committee consisting of the Chair (Postgraduate Coordinator for Admissions) and three readers: the supervisor, the associate supervisor, and a third reader nominated by the supervisor.

**4. Preliminary meeting.** At the time of submission of the first year research plan (First semester of candidature: 3 months after commencement), an MSc student who plans to apply to upgrade must meet with their primary and associate supervisor(s) (who will be part of the committee to consider their upgrade application) to discuss what criteria the supervisors expect to apply when considering the student’s upgrade application. The supervisor should specify these expectations in a short letter, signed by the supervisors and the student, and lodge it with the Postgraduate Coordinator for admissions. The basic criterion for upgrading is that there is evidence that the student is highly likely to successfully complete a PhD thesis, but the nature of this evidence will vary by research area. If the supervisors and student cannot reach agreement on appropriate expectations, the PG Coordinator should be informed.

**5. Earliest and latest dates for application.** The application must be submitted at least a month before the end of the second semester of candidature (or fourth semester in the case of part-time students), and no earlier than the end of the first semester (or second semester for part-time). Variations to this timing requirement will only be considered in extraordinary circumstances.

**6. First Year Progress Report.** If the application is ready for submission at the same time as the First Year Progress Report, the application can be used as a substitute for this report and the meeting arranged by the student to receive feedback regarding the progress report can double as the upgrade meeting.

**7. Supervisor’s letter.** The supervisor should send a separate letter to the Postgraduate Coordinator (Admissions), commenting on the feasibility and quality of the proposed research as a PhD project, and on the student’s ability to complete in time, and nominating a third reader.

**8. Distributing report and arranging the meeting.** When the PG Coordinator has approved the nominated committee, the student:

- a. sends the application to each committee member
- b. arranges a meeting with the committee to discuss the application, usually by early February (for upgrades commencing Semester 1) or late June (for upgrades commencing Semester 2)

**9. Structure of meeting.** At the meeting, the application is initially discussed in the absence of the candidate, so that the readers can raise any questions/concerns. The candidate is then joins the meeting and is asked to address any questions/concerns, and suggested modifications are discussed. Finally, in the absence of the candidate, the panel addresses the relevant criteria and decides on its recommendations.

**10. Upgrade report.** The chairperson completes the upgrade report form, in which one of four recommendations can be made:

- A. Upgrade approved
- B. Upgrade approved on completion of minor modifications as recommended by the committee and to the satisfaction of the PG Coordinator.
- C. Upgrade not approved, but the student is invited to reapply at a specified time, which must be no later than the end of the student's third semester (full-time equivalent). On the upgrade report form the committee must indicate the criteria they will apply when considering a revised application, and the timeline for consideration of the revision. Note that this option cannot be recommended for a student who is within two semesters of their final completion date for the MSc thesis.
- D. Upgrade not approved, student to proceed to complete MSc candidature.

In making their recommendation, the committee should be guided, but is not bound by, the letter arising from the initial meeting with the student. If the criteria appear to deviate significantly from the earlier letter, the reasons for this should be given in the upgrade report.

**11. Recommendation to Faculty.** When the final recommendation decided upon, the PGC completes and signs off on the Faculty Application form and forwards it to the Science Faculty.

**12. Exceptions.** On written application to the PGC, exception to these guidelines may be made for a student. The application should make clear why an exception should be made.

**13.** Note that a student who upgrades cannot be awarded the MSc degree as well as the PhD degree. A student who has been awarded the MSc degree cannot use the same work as part of their PhD research.