

Driving Climate Positive Futures

Cotutelle Doctoral Candidates Annual Milestone Reviews

Important Information for EU Supervisors

In the DREAM+PLAN Cotutelle Agreements, the following clause can be found in *HDR Progress Management and Support Procedure* and *HDR Progress Management and Support Schedule 1 – Milestone Submission Requirements, Assessment Criteria and Outcomes*:

“For candidates enrolled through a collaborative research training agreement or joint PhD, candidature milestones should align with the requirements of the partner institutions where possible. Milestones which are completed at a partner institution and involve the RMIT supervisors on the panel, will be deemed to be the equivalent of RMIT milestones and will not be required to be duplicated at RMIT.”

Language differentiation:

- RMIT University refers to mandatory Annual Reviews for PhD Candidates as ‘Milestones’, with the Year 1 Milestone also referred to as the ‘*Confirmation of Candidature*’ (CoC).
- Whilst Annual Reviews are also mandatory in most locations, and often have similar requirements, they may be referred to differently. For example, in TalTech, these are referred to as ‘*Attestation*’.

Justification for DPP Cotutelle’s to complete the first annual Review Milestone at EU Partner Institutions:

- Doctoral Candidates (DCs) will be located in Europe, Year 1 of their candidacy;
- Misalignment between the European and Australian Academic Calendars;
- Time zone differences across the Consortium.

Year 1 Milestone:

- Will, where possible, be completed at the EU Employing Institution of the DC, and equivalence can be guaranteed. Note: *For EU partner institutions that do not have a formal annual review process or do not wish to implement this proposed process the DREAM+PLAN doctoral candidates will be required to undertake the CoC under the regular RMIT process;*
- Will be led by DC’s Lead Supervisor (EU side);

- Timeline is a key consideration: **Must be taken before the 1-year anniversary of the official student enrolment date;**
- To ensure “...candidate milestones should align with the requirements of the partner institutions where possible” it is important EU Supervisors are aware of **RMIT’s Annual Review Requirements:**
 - **Candidates complete RMIT Milestone Information Capture Form:** as soon as the milestone presentation is scheduled at the EU employing institution, the Doctoral Candidate completes the RMIT [Milestone Information Capture Form](#).
 - **Panel:** should have a **similar** composition as RMIT would have:
 - **Chair** – a senior academic such as PhD program chair (not the candidate’s supervisors for independence);
 - **Independent Member** – definition ‘a registered supervisor outside the candidate’s supervisory team providing additional feedback from a methodological, subject matter, or interdisciplinary perspective.’ If external to the university, they must have a doctoral qualification; **and**
 - **Senior Supervisors of the DC (from both the EU and AU sides) MUST** be present or nominate a proxy if they cannot attend (e.g. Associate Supervisor). A proxy however is not the preferred position. To offer the best chance of the Lead Supervisor attending, it is important to:
 - Schedule well in advance within reasonable working hours considering time zone differences and calendar invites set up and locked into Panel Member calendars.
- **From the DREAM+PLAN perspective:**
 - We **recommend** participation of a senior supervisor from another university within DREAM+PLAN’s Consortium to help create synergies across the program and uplift the visibility of our DCs research as well as reinforce the message that DREAM+PLAN students whilst enrolled in 2 Institutions are also part of an EU Funded Program. This is an objective of the funding and a requirement from the funding body.
 - The DREAM+PLAN Management Team is happy to assist with identifying an independent senior supervisor panel member;
 - It is also **desirable** and **preferable** to **include an Industry Panel Member** such as their Industry Mentor.
- **Documentation for Panel Members:**
 - Panel Members provide their feedback to the Chair using as they see fit the Panel Member Confirmation of Candidature Feedback Template provided, in addition to oral feedback given during the presentation and discussion ([Appendix 1: Panel Member Comments/Feedback Template](#)).

- **Following the Milestone Panel Presentation:**
 - RMIT's Research Training Services Team requests endorsement from the Senior Supervisors confirming:
 - Their attendance at the presentation; and
 - The outcome of the presentation.

- **Doctoral Candidate Responsibilities:**
 - The Candidate is invited to upload the following documents to their RMIT Sharepoint Milestone folder:
 - Milestone written submission ([Appendix 2 template](#)).
Word count: **5,000 – 10,000 (as disciplinarily appropriate)**.

- **Chair Responsibilities:**
 - Convening the milestone review.
 - Ensure all required panel members are present before the presentation may commence.
 - Reviews all research ethics and governance requirements to verify that the candidate has the required approvals or exemptions, or a clear plan to obtain them. You must document this discussion in your feedback.
 - Ensure attendees are respectful and quiet during the presentation, managing questions in the designated Q&A period.
 - Dissuade supervisors from answering questions on behalf of the candidate unless asked for their opinion.
 - The evaluation of the milestone review (the feedback) is to be completed for each candidate.
 - The Chair must collate all Panel feedback and complete the Chair feedback form template - [Appendix 3 Chair Formal Feedback Template](#) within 5 working days of the Milestone presentation and seek any formal endorsement from the European Institution Doctoral School if necessary.
 - After the candidate has presented and the Q&A, the Chair provides a consolidated feedback to the doctoral candidate discusses the most important issues with the candidate.
 - You are advised to retain the notes from each milestone presentation for at least 3 months in case SGR query the decision.
 - The Chair recommends that the doctoral candidate reviews the evaluation with the supervisors at the next supervision meeting following the milestone.

Important Notes!

- At the end of the presentation, the Chair is to ask the candidate and attendees to leave to deliberate on the outcome with panel members. Once an outcome is decided, the Chair can invite the candidate back to provide feedback on their milestone.
 - The **Report submitted must be the final version**, meaning it has already received all required endorsements from the local doctoral school, whenever such internal validation is part of their process. **Equivalence can only be assessed on the basis of a final, validated outcome, in line with EU practice.**
 - Form templates provided are generic based on the DREAM+PLAN program and aligned templates used by Business and Law, Design & Social Context Colleges. **For STEM students**, please check if anything additional / different information is required for any template.
- **RMIT School of Graduate Research (SGR) Confirms and Records Outcome:**
 - Once all required documents and approvals are received, SGR:
 - Records the milestone as achieved, and
 - Issues the formal notification outcome via SMP.

Disclaimer: Whilst these are recommendations, overall, it is imperative that Panels maintain a level of ‘independence’ and consider equivalence in spirit / philosophy.

Year 2 Milestone:

- DCs will undertake their 2nd Milestone during their secondment to RMIT University, where possible.

Year 3 Milestone: will again be undertaken in Europe, where possible.

Appendix Summary

Note: Provided as separate documents.

1. **Appendix 1:** Milestone Panel Member Comments / Feedback Template.
2. **Appendix 2:** Doctoral Candidate Milestone Written Submission Template.
3. **Appendix 3:** Milestone Chair Formal Panel Feedback Template.