Composition of candidature confirmation committees – A student’s committee should include their advisors, the Chair (the “Expert Reader” appointed by the Postgraduate Coordinator with advice from the Principal Advisor), and sometimes a member of the Graduate Studies Committee (at the discretion of the Postgraduate Coordinator). In ideal circumstances all of these members should be present for the student’s talk and the interview, which would usually occur immediately after the talk.

What should be discussed at the interview – The Chair of the committee should run the meeting. The format should be informal and collegial, but the meeting should be thorough. The discussion should be focused on the material presented in the student’s written document, which should have been read by all committee members, and in the talk. The following topics should be covered:

- the feasibility, scope, originality and duration of the project, keeping in mind how far into their enrolment the student is and their particular scholarship situation
- the composition of the student’s advisory committee, with Associate Advisors being nominated if appropriate (at least one MUST be nominated at this interview if none have yet been assigned); the roles expected of each Associate Advisor should be discussed
- whether the budget is realistic and sufficient funds are available for the project, and whether the student will be able to acquire the necessary skills
- any ethical, bio-safety or IP issues that are relevant
- authorship of proposed publications – the proposal should identify likely thesis chapters and there should be at least preliminary discussions at this meeting about who would be expected to be authors on each chapter, recognizing of course that such situations can change and that this should be the start of an ongoing dialogue
- any other issues raised by any of the participants
- finally, the student and Principal Advisor should be asked whether either would like to be interviewed separately by the committee after the general discussion.

At the end of the interview, the committee should excuse the candidate and should then agree on the outcome of the meeting, which should be one of the following three options.

- the student’s PhD candidature will be confirmed (CONFIRMATION)
- the student must modify their written proposal/literature review, as suggested at the interview, within two weeks – if the modifications are considered acceptable, the student will then be confirmed (UNOFFICIAL EXTENSION OF PROVISIONAL CANDIDATURE)
- the student’s provisional candidature will be extended to a specific date (usually three months), and the student will be informed in writing of what he/she will have to do by that date to be again considered for confirmation. A second extension of provisional candidature will be granted only under exceptional circumstances. (OFFICIAL EXTENSION OF PROVISIONAL CANDIDATURE)

The Chair of the committee should then write a report on the outcome of the meeting, covering the seven topics listed above, plus any other major topics that arise. This will be attached to the student’s candidature confirmation form, and a copy will be given to the student. It is particularly important that this document summarize any actions that the student has been asked to make, e.g., modifications to the written proposal.