



Curtin University

PREPARING THE CANDIDACY APPLICATION

Dr Lisa Hartley

Overview of the Research Degree Process

- Application for Admission and Enrolment
- Application for Candidacy and Ethics Clearance
- Research and Writing of Thesis
- Submission of Thesis for Examination
- Graduation



Really Important Questions

Some questions are more important than others. The next slide contains three important ones... Take a few minutes to consider them for your own circumstances, take some notes, discuss your key concerns in a small group. Are your concerns the same as others?



1. Is the research topic of sufficient interest to sustain you through the whole of the thesis enrolment?
2. Is the research do-able, that is can it be conducted and managed by you?
3. Will the research be worthwhile and make a contribution to the field?



The Candidacy Process

1. Preparation of the summary of proposed research...
 - Who should help?
 - What goes where?
2. Completion of the candidacy form
3. Presentation of proposal for formal review
4. Revision if required
5. Formal approval by School and Faculty



Formatting and Submission Requirements

- Doctoral application for candidacy – a maximum of **ten** typewritten pages (excluding references)
- Master application for candidacy – a maximum of **five** typewritten pages (excluding references)
- All pages must be numbered and the font size should be a minimum of 11 point
- Submit with the completed [Application for Candidacy / Conversion of Candidacy](#) form



Who Will be Involved in Your Candidature?

- Supervisor
- Co-supervisor
- Associate Supervisor/s
- Chair of the Thesis Committee
- Postgraduate Co-ordinator
- Head of School
- Office of Research and Graduate Studies
- Graduate Research School



- What do you think the role of the SUPERVISOR might be in the candidacy process?
- What are the responsibilities of the RESEARCH STUDENT during the candidacy process?



Key Components of the Candidacy Proposal

- Abstract
- Objectives, Background, Significance, Methods
- Ethics
- Facilities and Resources
- Data Storage
- Time Schedule
- References
- Budget



Abstract

- Motivation
- Problem statement
- Approach
- Expected outcomes

Tips

- Keep it simple
- Avoid use of jargon or highly technical language



“Now I know who I am” A non-refugee writing refugee life stories.

This research will explore how narrative identity can be developed by refugees through a collaborative process working with a non-refugee narrator at a time when the world is facing one of the biggest humanitarian crises it has ever experienced.

At the end of 2014, nearly 60 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide. In Australia, much of the popular narrative about refugees and asylum seekers has become politicised, negative and dehumanising. The creative component of this research will present a personal view of the refugee experience in Australia by combining biography, memoir and history in a life writing collection of eight refugee stories written by me as a non-refugee narrator. The exegesis will explore and contribute to the literature on how the narrator’s position influences a collaborative telling of a refugee life story.

There has been limited research undertaken into the role of non-refugee narrators collaborating with refugees to tell their stories in more complex and interesting ways. My exegesis and creative work will contribute to the field of life writing and refugee scholarship by expanding the discussion about collaborative life writing, narration and identity amongst refugees.



Objectives, Background, Significance, Methods

- **Objectives:** Outline the research problem and what question you'll be answering
- **Background:** The literature review provides an overview of what is known and where your question fits
- **Significance:** Shows how your research will impact on the field; answers the 'So what?' question
- **Methods:** Explains in detail the ways in which each objective will be carried out; appropriate to methodologies in your field.



An Example of Research Objectives

In addressing my research question I will examine the role of the non-refugee narrator in writing refugee life stories. In particular, I will explore how narrative identity can be developed through a collaborative process. My objectives are to:

- Critically analyse a body of work about refugees that has been re-counted in a collaborative method between non-refugee narrators and refugees, principally from Australia, but including major examples from other countries, over the last twenty five years.
- Interview, explore and record the life stories of refugees who have settled in Australia using a phenomenological, ethical research process.
- Write a collection of life stories about eight refugees with myself as the narrator in the creative component of my research.



An Example of a Significance Statement

Refugee stories have taken on an even greater importance because of the political and social concern about the plight of refugees around the world in recent years. The growing refugee crisis in Europe during the period of August and September 2015 seems to be generating changes in attitudes of governments and communities globally with many discussions about the need for better strategies (Nougayrede, 2015). I will continue to monitor these changes which may influence my research and writing.

My research will contribute to this important socio-cultural global debate. As Eakin argues, “Life writing has the potential to reform dehumanising models of self and life story that society would impose on disempowered groups” (Eakin, 2004, p.11). I will position the creative work as a socially progressive text that aims to educate and inform readers, accompanied by a detailed textual analysis in my exegesis that will critique previously published examples of refugee life stories written in collaboration with non-refugee narrators.

My exegesis and creative work will fill an important void in life writing about refugees, in particular where the non-refugee narrator can be a different conduit, acting as a proxy to the reader helping them to relate to and understand refugee and asylum seeker life stories. My work will also add further to the scholarly work on collaborative life writing.



Really Important Questions Part Two

- Will you be able to obtain data and protect the confidentiality of data sources?
- Are the facilities available to carry out the program of research?
- In what form will the thesis be presented to the examiners?

Ethics

This section must clearly demonstrate that you have considered all ethical issues which may arise and the manner in which they will be addressed.

Research involving humans is subject to the [*National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\)*](#) published by the National Health and Medical Research Committee (NHMRC). For further information, guidelines and/or an application form see research.curtin.edu.au/research-integrity-ethics/human-research-ethics



An Example of an Ethics Statement

The research will be conducted in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans and with Curtin University regulations for ethical research. On acceptance of my candidacy application, I will apply for ethics approval from the university.

The importance of building ethical consent processes with the eight refugees will be addressed at the beginning of my research. All participants will be given a plain English summary of my research along with a written consent form. I will also spend time with each prospective participant explaining the research, the process, how I wrote my previous book, my experience in refugee communities and my current work with refugees at a number of not for profit agencies. I will answer any questions and concerns that participants may have before we begin the interviews and at any time during the process. As outlined in the methodology, my planned approach of working towards a 'reciprocal relationship' in the research aims to ensure each person is informed throughout the research and writing process.



Ethics Statement...continued

Refugees are, as I have noted, a potentially vulnerable group and in interviewing people about their life stories, the research may trigger memories of a traumatic time for refugees. I have a number of strategies in place to mitigate the risk of re-traumatisation of refugees and asylum seekers. Since I began my first narrated book of life stories about refugees in 2011, I have made connections with a number of respected refugee support agencies and counselling services. I also serve on the Board of the Edmund Rice Centre in Perth – a highly respected not for profit agency that assists refugees in a variety of ways. This gives me access to counselling experts who work with refugees. There are also a number of specialist trauma and torture counselling agencies in Perth to which I could refer someone should they need it.

I am also conscious that hearing traumatic stories may cause some issues for me as the researcher. For myself, I have the available services of a psychologist who has previously assisted me in techniques of de-briefing after particularly stressful occasions of listening to refugee testimony. I also have regular meetings with my Curtin University supervisors, both have experience in supervising students working with potentially traumatic and personal material.



Facilities and Resources

Are there facilities and resources available to carry out the research?

If not locally, then where? If there are costs involved, how will they be covered?



Funding for Consumables and Fieldwork

Each full-time student shall receive an allowance to support the cost of research consumables and travel. The current allowance for Humanities students is \$1,400 per year. This sum is prorated for part-time students.

After confirmation of candidacy, students will be prompted to setup a Concur account to claim reimbursement, either via the website or a smartphone app.

Please contact the Graduate Research School for more information or see the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student Consumables Allowance.

<http://17986-presscdn-0-31.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/03/GS-ConsGuide-17-07-15.pdf>



Conference Funding

The University shall provide funding to assist all Doctoral students for at least one visit to a national or international conference during the period of candidature to present a paper or otherwise actively participate (in a discipline specific context) in the conference program. The maximum available level of funding for each student shall be \$2,500. The funding should contribute to the cost of the most economical return airfare, agreed per diem costs (based on student style accommodation) and registration fees. Applications must be approved by the Graduate Research School prior to degree completion.

Reimbursement for funds expended will be done through Concur.

You can access the Conference Approval and Travel Form here

https://travel.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/2017_Student_Travel_Approval_Form.pdf



An Example of a Facilities and Resources Statement

I have access to all the facilities and resources required to complete this project. I have a fully equipped home office which includes desktop computer, printer, lap top, internet and email access. I have several high quality digital recorders for recording interviews that have USB compatibility for computer back up. I have complete access to library and interlibrary facilities and a work space at the Curtin Humanities Post Grad hub should I require it on campus.



Data Storage

The [Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority \(WAUSDA\)](#) requires all data you have collected in your research to be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the research or seven years after it is published, whichever is later. This means that you and your Enrolling Area must ensure secure storage of your data for this period.



Time Schedule

You need to provide a realistic timeline indicating the expected stages of the research and duration.

Dates	Activities
April 2015 – November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of candidacy proposal • Literature review • Candidacy submission • Preparation of ethics application
November 2015 – April 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review for exegesis • Preparation of ethics review • Identification of first participants
May 2016 – December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing literature review • Work on exegesis • Interviewing participants • Feedback to participants • First draft of initial life stories • Further identification of other participants • Secondary contextual research about participants (politics, history, cultural and social background)
January 2017 – November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing participants • Feedback to participants • Second and third drafts of life stories and linking themes and narrative in creative practice • Transcribing interviews • Further contextual research about participants (politics, history, social background)
December 2017 - December 2018	Final drafting and writing phase of creative work and exegesis
January 2019 – March 2019	Final editing
April 2019	Submission



Budget

The budget proposal provided at the candidacy application stage should be a projection of the usage of the HDR Student Consumables Allowance for the lifecycle of the project. Due to the uncertain nature of projects, it is anticipated that budgets will be revised as the need arises.



The following conditions are considered by the Faculty Graduate Studies Committee in the granting of candidacy:

- Definition of an acceptable research program, including its objectives, methodology, facilities, resources and a time schedule for completion
- Attainment of the necessary level of knowledge and skills to proceed with the proposed research program
- Acceptance of the nominated Thesis Committee
- Certification by the Head of Enrolling Area that adequate facilities and resources are available for the proposed research program



Granting of Candidacy continued

- Appropriate identification of ethical issues for research involving animals and humans
- Acceptance of appropriate arrangements regarding the ownership of intellectual property in accordance with current University policy
- Certification by the Head of Enrolling Area that the University's health and safety requirements are satisfied
- Successful completion of the Research Integrity Training program
- Completion of a Student Budget Proposal



The Candidacy Approval Process

- The completed [Application for Candidacy / Conversion of Candidacy](#) form is submitted together with the final research proposal to your supervisor.
- Once signed-off by your Head of enrolling area, your application will then be assessed by the Faculty Graduate Studies Committee who will determine whether it fulfils the conditions for candidature.
- You will be notified of approval by the Graduate Research School and your status will change from Provisional Candidature to Confirmed Candidature. If candidacy has not been approved, you will be advised accordingly.
- For any enquiries regarding the candidacy process, contact the [Graduate Research School](#).



Timeline for the Candidacy Application

Doctoral

- Full-time candidates – 6 months from enrolment in the thesis component
- Part-time candidates – 12 months from enrolment in the thesis component

Masters by research

- Full-time candidates – 3 months from enrolment in the thesis component
- Part-time candidates – 6 months from enrolment in the thesis component

You can apply for an extension if late



Suggested Timeline for Candidacy

- Conceptualise objectives and methods -1/2 to 2/3 of time
- Commence writing - early and ongoing
- Advanced liaison with key organisations and subjects – ongoing
- Directed reading and critique of literature – ongoing
- Prepare a first draft and a subsequent drafts – 1/4 to 1/6 of time
- Prepare a final draft – 1/4 to 1/6 of time
- Complete Application for Candidacy Form



Timeline for Thesis

Expected timeline

- Aim for three years
- Prepare carefully
- Have contingency plans



The Golden Rule

Write early
write often!



Final Comments

- Selection of topic is an important issue
- Realistic time frame is essential
- Regular contact and an honest relationship with members of your thesis committee is crucial
- Deal with problems promptly and professionally as they arise
- Significant projects of high quality are always the aim

