

Survival guide to your PhD

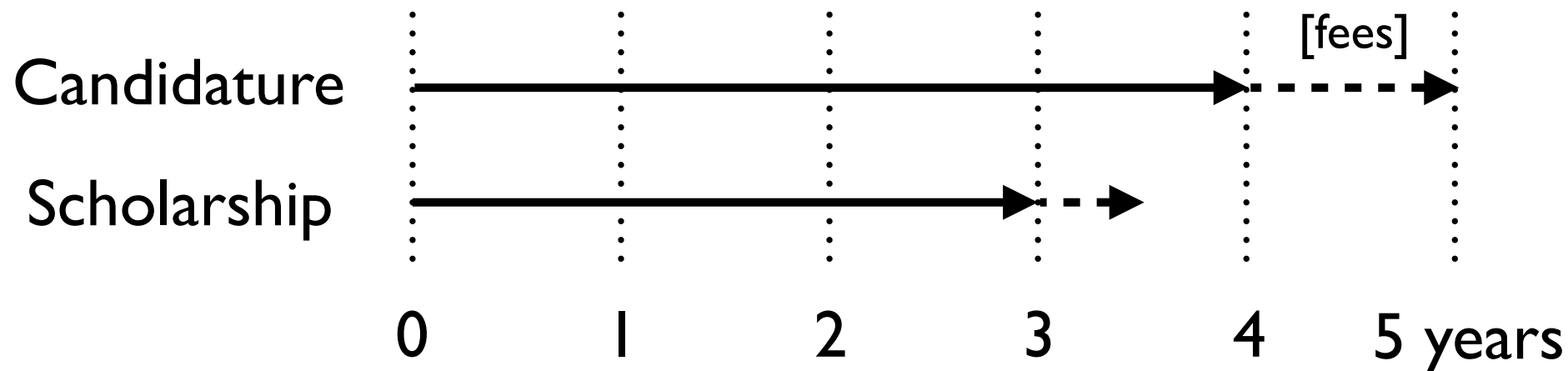


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Survival guide to your PhD

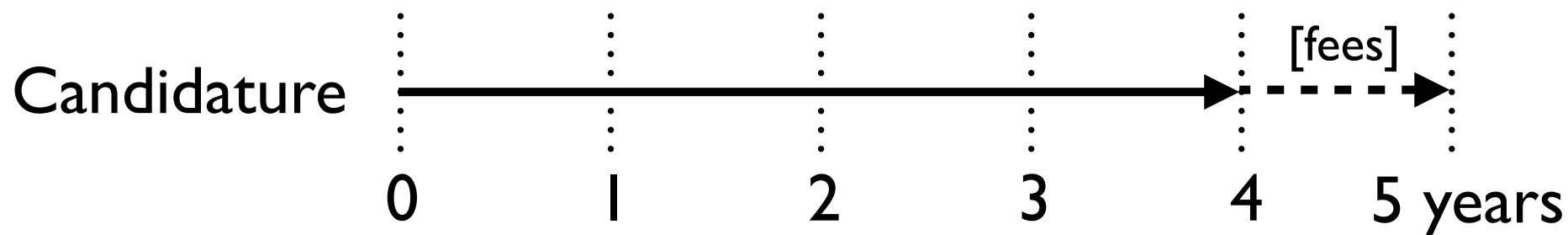
- Rules regarding candidature and scholarship
- Leave (sick leave, leave of absence, maternity leave, etc.)
- Progress reviews and status
- PhD examination
- Transfer from PhD to Masters
- Things going wrong - what can happen?
- Things going wrong - who can help you?

Candidature vs. scholarship



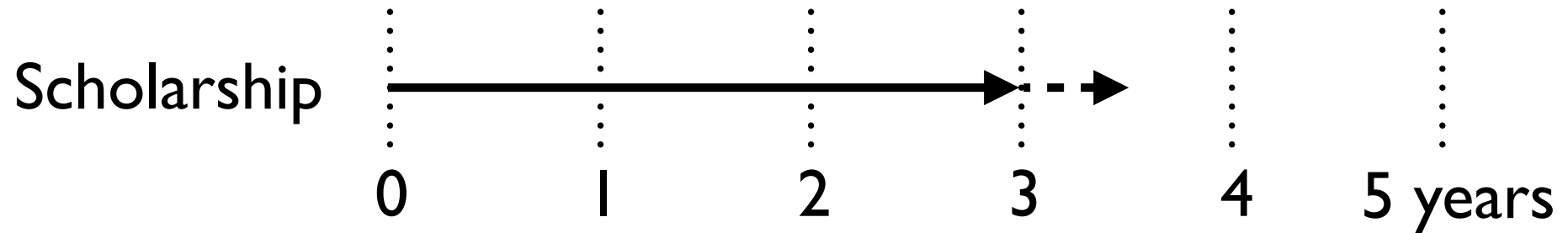
- **Candidature** is the length of time Swinburne allows to complete a PhD. The default period is **4 years full-time**.
- The **scholarship** is the combination of the stipend and tuition fees payment. The default period is **3 years full-time** followed by a **6-month extension**.

Candidature



- Students can apply for candidature extension to **5-year maximum** [international students need visa extension]
- Domestic students may convert to **part-time enrolment** which doubles remaining candidature time. International students may convert in cases of medical condition etc.
- After 4 years' candidature **tuition fees are levied** per semester. These are \$13K for international students. Swinburne Research may give **fee exemption** for 1 month

Scholarship



- Typical duration of CAS PhD is 3.5 years. Student and supervisor apply for **6-month scholarship extension**
- This is done by completing “Application for scholarship extension” form 2-3 months before 3-year point
- Important to fill in these forms carefully, but funding is available and all past extensions have been approved

Leave

Various types of student leave are available

- Annual leave
- Sick leave
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Leave of Absence

Annual leave

- Students receive up to **20 days recreational leave** for each year of the scholarship (accrues over time). Does not extend the scholarship.
- All students taking annual leave of 1 week or more should complete the “Annual Leave form”

Sick leave

Students are entitled to paid sick leave of up to 12 weeks (for periods of illness longer than 10 days)

- For shorter periods students can take up to 10 days sick leave per year (with no scholarship extension)
- Beyond 10 days, sick leave is applied for by **completing a Leave of Absence form with medical certificate**. Sick leave can include mental health, as well as family caring responsibilities
- The **scholarship and candidature are extended** up to a total of 12 weeks

Maternity/paternity leave

- Students who have completed 12 months or more of their scholarship are entitled to a **maximum of 12 weeks paid maternity leave.**
- Paid paternity leave (15 days) is also available at the time of birth.

Leave of Absence

Students can apply for 6 months' Leave of Absence at any time, up to a maximum 1 years' leave

- For international students there should be “compassionate circumstances” [visa regulations]. Includes : **medical grounds (and mental health) or family circumstances**. (Does not include thesis writing.)
- **Candidature is extended** by the leave period. **Scholarship** will depend if the leave is paid/unpaid
- There is no requirement for international students to depart Australia (although may not have work rights)

Other awards or salary

- Students can apply for other financial awards, but these **must not provide a benefit greater than 75%** of the normal scholarship stipend
- Any additional employment undertaken during the PhD **must not exceed 8 hours a week** on average

Student progress reviews

PhD progress is monitored through annual reviews

- Provide a check-point that everything is going well towards the PhD (e.g. project, supervision, resources)
- A chance for practising talks and scientific writing
- A chance for everyone in the Centre to hear about your science!
- An opportunity to receive useful feedback on all aspects of the PhD from an independent panel

Student progress reviews

PhD progress is monitored through annual reviews

- **Centre reviews** occur once a year, typically at 6, 18, 30 months of candidature, and involve a talk in the VR theatre, written report and panel discussion
- **Faculty reviews** occur once a calendar year [Feb] and student/supervisor complete the “Annual Progress Review form”
- Each review outcome is one of “**satisfactory progress**”, “**behind schedule progress**” or “**unsatisfactory progress and candidature is at risk**”

Progress status

- **Behind schedule progress does not call into question continued candidature** but triggers a discussion of the best way to keep momentum going in the PhD
- An **action plan** is agreed upon and a follow-up process will occur, where the progress status must be resolved to “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory”
- **Unsatisfactory progress triggers the “at risk process”** involving the Faculty Associate Dean (Research)
- An action plan is agreed upon, and the outcome of the process is either “satisfactory” or the end of candidature

Transfer from PhD to Masters by Research

As a last resort if all else fails , PhD students may transfer to a Masters by Research

- Normal candidature time for a Masters is **2 years** with an extension possible [with fees] to 3 years
- Time already spent on a PhD is counted in the Masters candidature. Therefore **conversion should normally occur by the end of year 1** although is possible in year 2
- **Unofficially** Swinburne Research have indicated that they may accept a Masters submission at any stage of a PhD without charging tuition fees [**this is under review**]

PhD examination

- A PhD thesis is typically 150-250 pages. It is read by **2 examiners nominated by the supervisor** [or 3 for a viva]
- When you submit your thesis you need the “Examinable outcome submission form” and (usually) the “Change of Thesis Title form”
- Examination reports arrive within a few weeks. Typically corrections will be requested.
- After the PhD award : your scholarship includes **\$840 for thesis printing/binding!** (e.g. Swinburne Press).

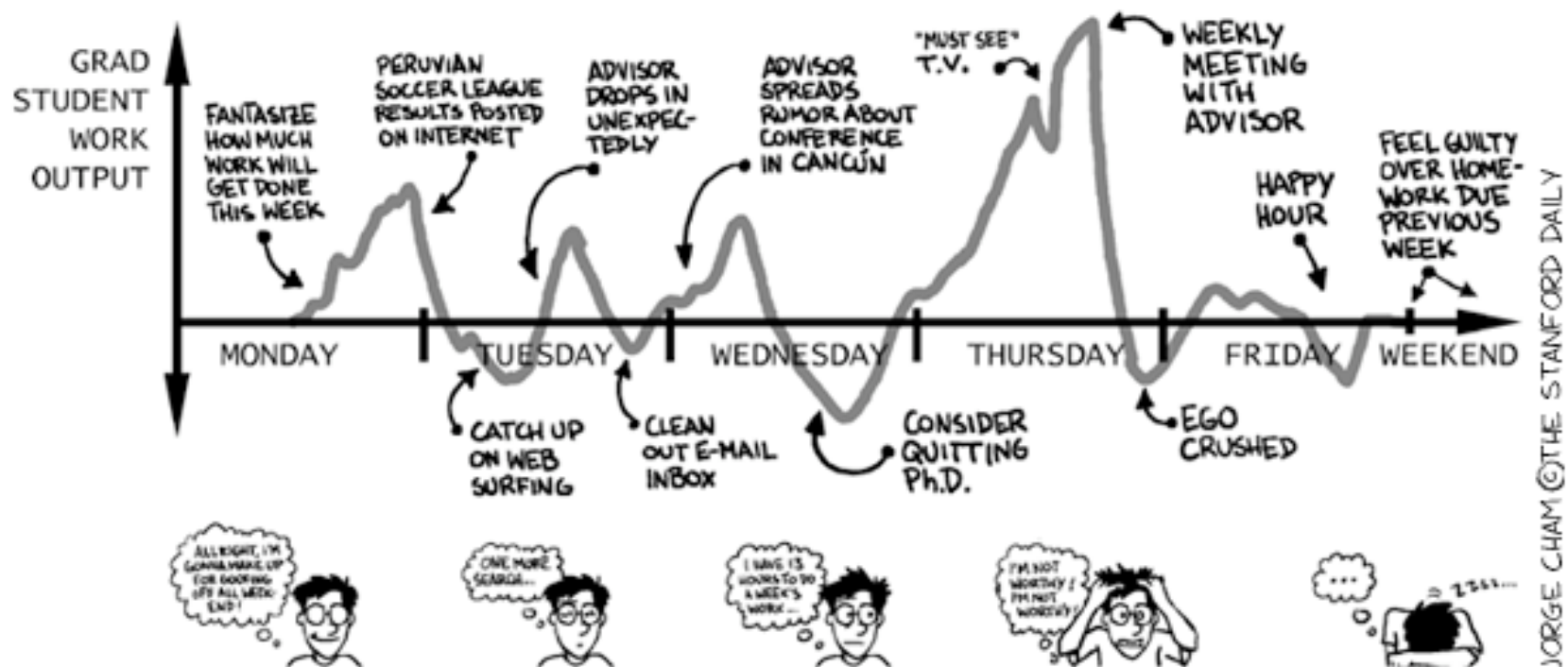
PhD examination by viva

Students have the option of PhD examination by viva

- CAS students are encouraged to consider PhD examination by viva
- Swinburne Graduate Studies must be notified 2-3 months prior to the submission of the thesis
- [these policies are under review]

When things go wrong ...

Many/most students face some difficult periods during a PhD. What can go wrong, and how can you find help ?



Good things about a PhD

- Solving problems for which no-one knows the answer, enormous opportunity for challenge and creativity
- The university environment; studying something just because it's interesting
- Wonderful opportunities to travel and meet with like-minded individuals across the world
- Obtaining a qualification that is well-respected by a range of professions

Difficult things about a PhD

- Technical difficulty of the work slowing progress
- Your project is mostly never working! [long time-frame of getting any satisfaction]



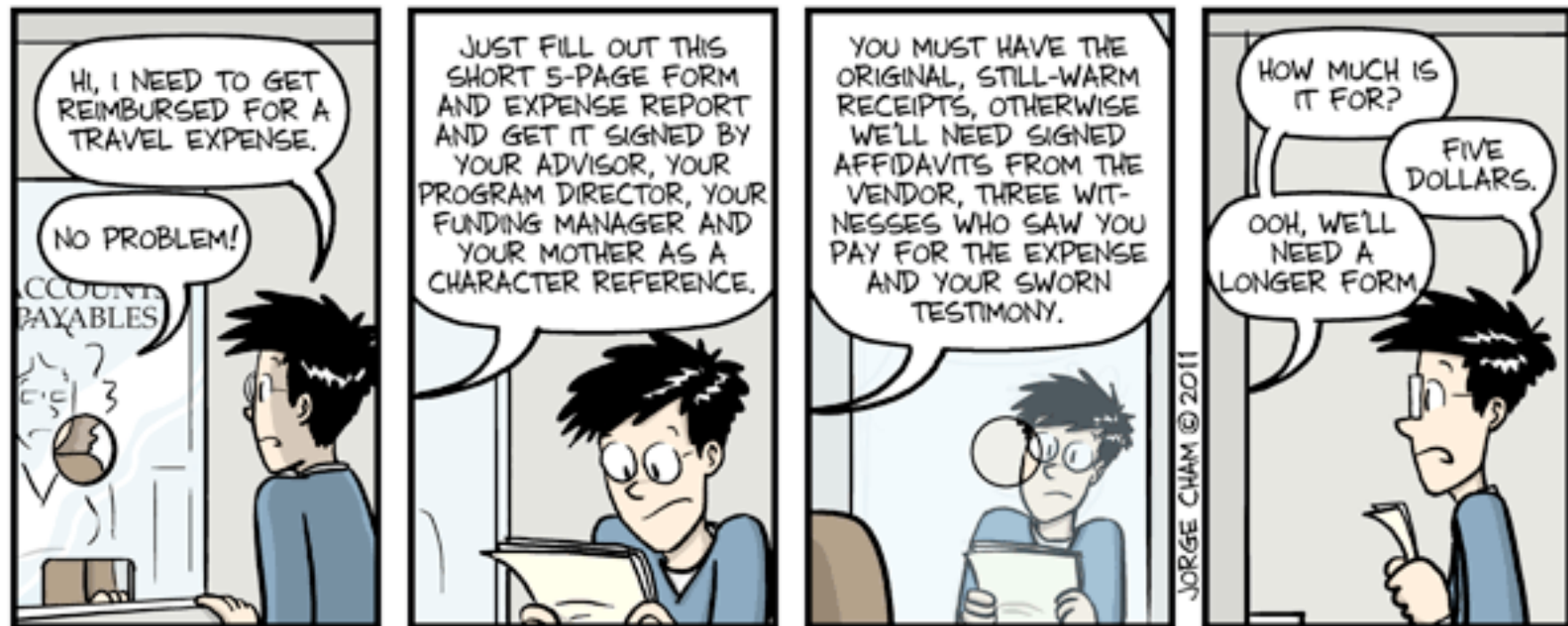
Difficult things about a PhD

- Pressure of academic world [comparing yourself to others, adversarial nature of science, etc.]
- Complex dynamic of relations with supervisor [simultaneous source of support and judgement]



Difficult things about a PhD

- For the case of international students, separation from family and old support network
- Financial issues!



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Difficult things about a PhD

All these factors can lead to practical and/or emotional upheaval. Please talk to someone !!

- “I am the only one having these problems, it is my fault”
- “A PhD is meant to be like this anyway”
- “I would only be bothering someone with an awkward and difficult conversation”
- “No-one would be able to help me”
- “I don’t want to share these issues with my co-workers”

People who want to help you

There are a range of people you can talk with

- **Bureaucratic issues:**
- CAS PhD co-ordinator
- Kirsty McKinnon (Faculty research administration)
- Jessica Power and Aimii Treweek (Swinburne Research)

People who want to help you

There are a range of people you can talk with

- **Personal issues:**
- CAS PhD mentors (currently Chris B , Virginia , Sarah)
- Swinburne counselling/health service (Level 4, George Building, Wakefield St.) - can register online, phone (8025), visit in person
- Your fellow students or colleagues, if you feel comfortable to do so
- Pam Green (head of Graduate Studies)