

Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 This policy prescribes the structure, requirements, and management of higher degrees by research (HDR) programs at the University.

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy and associated procedures apply to all Doctoral degrees and Research Master degrees. It applies to all students enrolled in, or proposing to enrol in, a HDR program.

2.2 This policy and associated procedures apply to all staff working in the HDR environment at the University

2.3 This policy does not apply to Bachelor (Honours) programs, Research Fellowships, Post-doctoral programs, or Honorary Doctorates.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures.

Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness:

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) mean the framework for recognition and endorsement of qualifications.

Candidate means a person enrolled in a higher degree by research program at the University (also known as a "student").

Candidature means duration of enrolment in a higher degree by research program.

Confirmed candidature means period of candidature in a higher degree by research program after the successful completion of the Confirmation of Candidature milestone, up to completion of program requirements or the date of expiry of candidature for that program (whichever comes first)

Creative work means an original product designed, created, or constructed by a candidate during candidature deriving from one or more of the creative arts including graphical and new media techniques.

Exegesis means a scholarly, critical commentary on the original creative work in dialogue with, and informing, that original work or collection of works, resulting from research undertaken and produced during candidature. The exegesis also includes explicit reference to the research methodologies employed in the creation of the original creative work.

Full-time study load means a higher degree by research candidate is enrolled in 48 units per semester and is expected to spend the equivalent of a working week on their study

Higher Degree by Research means a Research Doctorate or Research Masters course for which at least two-thirds of the student load for the course is required as research work

Part-time study load means a higher degree by research candidate is enrolled in 24 units per semester and is expected to spend the equivalent of 50% of a working week on their study

Probationary candidature means period of candidature in a higher degree by research program up to and including the successful completion of the Confirmation of Candidature milestone, or the date of expiry of probationary candidature for that program (whichever comes first).

Study load means the total units in which the student is enrolled in a determined study period. Higher degree by research candidates may undertake the degree with a full-time or part-time study load.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Academic Board

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Dean, Graduate Research

FIRST APPROVED

29 July 2014

LAST AMENDED

1 February 2023

REVIEW DATE

1 February 2028

STATUS

Active

Thesis means an original substantial piece of scholarly writing resulting from research undertaken by a candidate and produced during candidature to meet the requirements of the degree.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 The University's higher degree by research (HDR) programs are administered in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 and the Education Services for Overseas Students Act. The Higher Degree by Research Academic Policy is supported by the Higher Degree by Research Candidature – Procedures, Higher Degree by Research Thesis Submission and Examination – Procedures, and the Higher Degree by Research Supervision – Procedures, as well as related Guidelines.

5. Principles

5.1 The University makes admission offers to applicants who are deemed to have the background and abilities to indicate a reasonable expectation of success in the Higher Degree by Research program to which they are made an offer and in accordance with its Higher Degree by Research Candidature – Procedures. The University reserves the right to refuse admission where required resources are not available.

5.2 In support of excellence in higher degrees by research supervision, the University will maintain a register of HDR supervisors and will provide professional development opportunities for academic staff. Eligibility for HDR supervision is detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Supervision – Procedures.

5.3 The University requires Candidates to maintain a compliant supervision panel, as detailed in the HDR Candidature – Procedures.

5.4 The University provides fee information on the university website and in the Student Fees and Charges – Governing Policy. Additionally, accepted applicants receive information about fees in their letter of offer and via the University student enrolment system.

5.5 The University's HDR programs contain compulsory milestones and conditions which candidates must complete to fulfil their program requirements, as detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Candidature – Procedures, Higher Degree by Research Thesis Submission and Examination - Procedures and Higher Degree by Research Candidature Progression – Guidelines.

5.6 The University may require additional conditions be met, such as coursework. If coursework is required, the relevant course's tuition fees will be covered under the HDR program tuition fee and the Candidate will not be liable for any additional tuition fees related to the course.

5.7 The university will make available a comprehensive graduate research skills development program to all HDR candidates to support the achievement of the university's graduate attributes for HDR programs.

5.8 A candidate's research and thesis, or exegesis and creative work, must not contain as its main content any work or material which is embodied in a thesis or dissertation previously submitted by the candidate or any other person for a University degree or other similar qualification at this or other higher education institution, unless the Dean, Graduate Research approves otherwise.

5.9 HDR program requirements will be fulfilled when all compulsory milestones and conditions have been successfully completed and the candidate's thesis, or exegesis and creative work, has successfully passed examination and been accepted for the award of the degree, as detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Thesis Submission and Examination – Procedures and Higher Degree by Research Examination – Guidelines.

5.10 The University's Academic Board is the body that will confer the degree after successful completion of program requirements (as per Academic Board's Terms of Reference) and upon the recommendation of the Dean, Graduate Research.

5.11 The University's HDR programs are structured as below:

5.11.1 Research Doctoral degrees meet the Australian Qualifications Framework specifications at Level 10. Doctoral degrees are research degrees that require the candidate to make a substantial original contribution to knowledge through research, scholarship, and investigation in one or more fields of learning.

5.11.1.1 Period of candidature

From commencement date, not indicative of dates if transferring from another HDR program:

	PROBATIONARY CANDIDATURE EXPIRY	CONFIRMED CANDIDATURE EXPIRY
Based on full-time study load	1.5 years after commencement	4 years after commencement

5.11.2 Research Master degrees meet the Australian Qualifications Framework specifications at Level 9. Research Master degrees require the candidate to apply an advanced body of knowledge to produce a significant contribution of merit through a program of advanced research in a scholarly field of learning, providing a pathway for further learning.

5.11.2.1 Period of candidature

From commencement date, not indicative of dates if transferring from another HDR program:

	PROBATIONARY CANDIDATURE EXPIRY	CONFIRMED CANDIDATURE EXPIRY
Based on full-time study load	9 months after commencement	2 years after commencement

5.12 Candidates can request variations to their HDR program when their progress is interrupted for either research or non-research-related reasons. Leave of absence, change to study load and extensions to candidature duration may support of candidates to the successful completion of their HDR. Refer to the Higher Degree by Research Candidature – Procedures for further information.

5.13 Where the requirements of a specific HDR, as approved by the Academic Board, include coursework to be undertaken by all candidates:

5.13.1 the approved program requirements shall include the number of units required to be successfully completed, and any course(s) required to be undertaken and/or the set of courses from which the candidate may select their study program.

5.13.2 Candidates may be required to achieve a grade higher than a pass for coursework components to satisfy the degree requirements; if so, the minimum grade to be achieved shall be approved by the Academic Board.

5.13.3 Courses included in a HDR shall be postgraduate level courses.

5.13.4 In approving a specific HDR, the Academic Board may approve variations to the normal arrangements specified above, where the Enrolling Unit proposing the degree presents arguments to support the proposed variations in terms of the aims and objectives of the specific program, and where the proposed variations support the overall quality of the program and the experience of candidates.

5.14 A candidate for a HDR where coursework is not included in the structure of the program may be required to undertake coursework, such as a research methodology course or other specified courses, seminars, modules or reading activities, in addition to and as a support for their research. Where such activities are required:

5.14.1 They shall be specified as a condition of candidature by the Dean, Graduate Research and undertaken under the direction of the relevant Head of Enrolling Unit or nominee, and;

5.14.2 The Head of Enrolling Unit or nominee is required to advise the Graduate Research School that the additional requirements have been satisfactorily completed, and;

5.14.3 Tuition fees for coursework undertaken at the University as part of HDR program requirements (compulsory component of a specific HDR or required as a condition of offer) will be included in the HDR program tuition fee.

5.15 The University may offer jointly conferred HDR programs as specified in a legally binding agreement between the University and the partner institution in accordance with the University’s Management of Contracts and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUS) – Governing Policy.

6. Authorities/Responsibilities

6.1 The following authorities/responsibilities are delegated under this policy:

ACTIVITY	UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE
Approve the requirements of a specific HDR.	Academic Board

In approving a specific HDR, the Academic Board may approve variations to the normal arrangements specified in this policy, where the School proposing the degree presents arguments to support the proposed variations in terms of the aims and objectives of the specific program, and where the proposed variations support the overall quality of the program and the experience of candidates.

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings - Procedures
- Higher Degree by Research Program Accreditation - Academic Policy
- Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Submission and Examination - Procedures
- Human Research Ethics - Governing Policy
- Human Research Ethics - Procedures
- Intellectual Property - Governing Policy
- Intellectual Property: Commercialisation of Research Outcomes - Procedures
- Intellectual Property: Commercialisation Revenue - Procedures
- Intellectual Property: Student IP - Procedures
- Intellectual Property: Transfer of Rights to Creators - Procedures
- Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct - Procedures
- Research Data Management - Procedures
- Research Training Program Scholarships - Operational Policy
- Responsible Research Conduct - Governing Policy
- Student Conduct - Governing Policy
- Student Fees and Charges - Governing Policy
- Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy
- USC University Research Centres and Research Institutes - Operational Policy
- USC University Research Centres and Research Institutes - Procedures

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Submission and Examination - Procedures

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

- Research Master Degrees - Academic Policy
- Doctoral Degrees - Academic Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)
- Australian Qualifications Framework
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)
- Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2017