

# Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures



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## Definitions

Please refer to the university's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to these procedures and are critical to its effectiveness:

**Candidate** means a person admitted to a Higher Degree Research (HDR) program at the university (also known as a "student").

**Candidature** means duration of enrolment in a higher degree by research program. A Research student is considered to be a "candidate" for the higher degree by research program in which they are enrolled. All research and related work towards fulfilment of the requirements for a higher degree by research must be completed during enrolled candidature.

**Confirmed candidature** means period of enrolment in a HDR program after the successful completion of the Confirmation of Candidature milestone, up to the date of expiry of candidature for that program.

**Co-Supervisor** means a USC academic staff member who meets the criteria for and has been approved for registration as a USC HDR supervisor, but has not yet supervised a research student to successful completion of their degree. A registered co-supervisor may join an individual student's supervision panel as a co-supervisor only (i.e. may not be appointed to a student's panel as their principal supervisor).

**Consultant supervisor** means a person appointed to a student's supervision panel who does not meet the criteria for registration as a USC supervisor. Consultant supervisors are usually external to the university but may also be USC staff who do not meet the criteria for registration as a supervisor. Refer to the HDR Supervision – Procedures for a detailed description of a co-supervisor's roles and responsibilities.

**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.

**Head of Enrolling Unit** means the Head of School or Director of Institute of a candidate's enrolment.

**Leave of Absence** means a voluntary and temporary suspension of the higher degree by research candidature, also known as "break from studies".

**Milestones** are program requirements and periodic assessments of candidature progression including (but not limited to) Induction, Research Ethics and Integrity Training, Initial Plan and Progress Review, Conditions of Candidature, Confirmation of Candidature, subsequent Plan and Progress Reviews, Intention to Submit Thesis, Final Thesis Presentation, and Thesis Submission.

**Monitored candidature** means candidature that is placed under three-monthly review after being identified as not making satisfactory progress (or being at risk of not making satisfactory progress). Monitored candidature is designed to provide intensive support to a student to support achievement of their research goals and candidature milestones within maximum durations of candidature.

**Principal Supervisor** means a USC academic staff member who meets the criteria for and has been approved for registration as a USC Principal HDR supervisor. A registered principal supervisor may join an individual student's supervision panel as the student's principal supervisor or as a co-supervisor. Refer to the HDR Supervision – Procedures for a detailed description of a principal supervisor's roles and responsibilities.

**Probationary candidature** means period of enrolment in a HDR 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).

**Significant research component** means a substantial research project undertaken with appropriate research methodology.

**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.

## APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

## RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

## DESIGNATED OFFICER

Dean, Graduate Research

## FIRST APPROVED

29 July 2014

## LAST AMENDED

30 June 2020

## REVIEW DATE

30 May 2022

## STATUS

Active

## 1. Purpose of procedures

These procedures provide the framework for HDR candidature at the university. They should be read in conjunction with the Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy, and the following associated procedures and guidelines:

- Higher Degrees by Research Supervision – Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Submission and Examination – Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Admission and Enrolment – Guidelines
- Higher Degrees by Research Confirmation of Candidature – Guidelines
- Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Presentation – Guidelines
- Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Review – Guidelines
- Higher Degrees by Research Examiners – Guidelines

Refer to <https://www.usc.edu.au/research-and-innovation/research-students/hdr-candidature>

## 2. Advice to prospective candidates

Responsibility for promoting research training opportunities and providing advice to potential applicants at the university is distributed broadly across individual researchers, enrolling units, research groups, Student Services and Engagement, the Graduate Research School, Marketing and External Engagement and USC International.

All enquiries from prospective candidates should be dealt with promptly and professionally. Initial HDR enquiries should be referred to Student Services and Engagement ([information@usc.edu.au](mailto:information@usc.edu.au)) to enable timely and consistent advice.

## 3. Entry requirements

This section should be read in conjunction with the 'Higher Degrees by Research Admission and Enrolment – Guidelines'.

### 3.1 Doctoral degrees

To be eligible for admission to a doctoral degree, an applicant shall hold:

(a) a Bachelor Honours degree (AQF Level 8) with a significant research component with a minimum of Class IIA from a recognised higher education institution; or

(b) a Masters degree (AQF Level 9) with a significant research component equivalent to Honours degree research component from a recognised higher education institution; or

(c) a Bachelor degree (AQF Level 7) from a recognised higher education institution, and shall have achieved by subsequent work and study a standard equivalent to at least Class IIA Honours as may be approved by the Research Degrees Committee, or the Chairperson acting on behalf of the Committee; or

(d) a record of research or professional qualifications deemed by the Research Degrees Committee, or the Chairperson acting on behalf of the Committee, to be of a standard equivalent to at least Bachelors Honours degree Class IIA and providing a suitable background for the doctoral research the candidate is proposing to undertake.

In addition to this, an applicant for admission to the Doctor of Creative Arts shall:

(e) provide a portfolio containing evidence of the applicant's own original work which is assessed by the Head of School, as providing evidence of very high levels of creativity, knowledge and skill in one or more creative areas.

### 3.2 Research Master degrees

To be eligible for admission to a research Master degree, an applicant shall hold:

(a) a Bachelor degree (AQF Level 7) with a Grade Point Average of 5.0 or higher on a seven point scale from a recognised higher education institution; or

(b) a Bachelor Honours degree (AQF Level 8) Class IIB from a recognised higher education institution; or

(c) a record of qualifications and/or professional research experience deemed to be equivalent to the standard of (a) or (b) as may be approved by the Research Degrees Committee, or the Chairperson acting on behalf of the Committee.

3.2.1 The prior study must be in an area of study relevant to the discipline area of the Master degree. If the prior study has not included an appropriate preparation in research methodology, the candidate will be required to undertake an appropriate research methodology course, as specified by the relevant Head of School, as part of their candidature.

3.2.2 The admission requirements for a specific Master degree may include additional requirements, such as a Bachelor degree in the relevant discipline, professional registration, a specified number of years of professional practice, or other requirements indicative of a suitable preparation to undertake a research program at Master level. Admission requirements for specific HDRs are available on the university website.

### 3.3 English language proficiency requirements

3.3.1 Proficiency in the English language is required for entry to all programs and courses and any international or domestic applicant from a non-English speaking background must satisfy the university's standard and program specific English language requirements.

3.3.2 The university's standard and program specific English language requirements are approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) on the recommendation of the Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Quality). These must be readily available for all students and displayed on the university web site.

3.3.3 Any changes to the university's standard or program specific English language requirements must allow a sufficient lead time for the entry of students and must be approved through the appropriate channels. Test scores must be not more than two years old at the time of application. If the applicant has undertaken more than one test, then only the most recent test result will be considered.

## 4. Application for admission

4.1 The applicant initiates the admission process by contacting the relevant USC researchers setting out preliminary proposals of areas of research interest.

4.2 An application for admission to a HDR must be made via the prescribed application process as outlined on the USC website and must include a research proposal and required supporting documentation.

The research proposal will include:

- (a) Provisional thesis title;
- (b) Summary of proposed research;
- (c) Summary of relevant research literature;
- (d) Methodologies and methods to be used in the research;
- (e) Statement of required resources.

4.3 Applicants who submit an incomplete application will receive one notification that their application is incomplete and will have one month to submit any outstanding documentation. If the application remains incomplete after one month, the application will be disregarded.

4.4 An applicant seeking admission on the basis of professional research experience must provide an updated curriculum vitae, including contact details of their employer/supervisor who may be contacted by USC, to verify the claimed research experience and provide an assessment of the research activity.

4.5 The university reserves the right to request original or certified copies of supporting documentation (e.g. academic transcripts and completion certificates) as part of the admission process, as a condition of offer or at any time during candidature. Failure to produce requested original or certified copies of documents may result in withdrawal from the HDR program.

## 5. Admission decision

5.1 The Head of enrolling unit is the authority to make an offer of admission for admission categories outlined in clauses 3.1(a), 3.1(b), 3.1(e), 3.2(a) and 3.2(b). For admission categories outlined in clauses 3.1(c), 3.1(d), 3.2(c) and exemptions to the English language proficiency requirements, the Head of enrolling unit will make a recommendation to the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, who has the final decision-making authority. The Head of School and the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, have the authority to decline an application for admission.

5.1.1 Applications for admission to candidature are assessed by the proposed enrolling unit. Admission decisions shall be based on:

- (a) the applicant meeting the requirements for admission; and
- (b) the quality and feasibility of the applicant's proposed research project; and
- (c) appropriate knowledge and skills to pursue the proposed research project; and
- (d) the alignment of the proposed research project with the university's research priorities; and
- (e) the applicant meeting the minimum English language proficiency requirement set by the university; and
- (f) the enrolling unit having sufficient facilities and resources to fund and support the candidate and proposed research project to completion; and
- (g) the proposed program being completed in the recommended duration of candidature; and
- (h) the university having sufficient academic expertise to support the candidate and the proposed research project.

### 5.1.2 Exceptional Cases and Special Offers

Provision is made to admit individual persons who may not meet the standard entry requirements but, based on other considerations, are persons who have a high probability of success in research and whose admission is considered to bring benefits to both the university and the applicant. Approval of exceptional cases must consider equity of admission in relation to other applicants.

Applications for entry under this category require the approval of the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, upon recommendation by the Head of enrolling unit.

5.1.3 Prior research work undertaken as a candidate in a research higher degree undertaken at this or another recognised institution may be recognised towards the degree, provided that it has not been recognised for another award. Recognition of work done prior to admission, normally results in a change in the maximum thesis submission date. For students transferring between Australian institutions, the provisions of the Commonwealth's Research Training Program (RTP) apply.

An applicant previously enrolled in an HDR on the same or a similar topic at this or another institution who has failed the examination for the degree will not normally be admitted as a candidate.

5.1.4 Applicants are normally admitted to probationary candidature. An applicant may be approved for direct entry to confirmed candidature, if the relevant Head of enrolling unit is satisfied that:

- (a) at the time of, or immediately prior to, applying for entry, the applicant was enrolled as a candidate for a HDR at this or another approved higher education institution; and
- (b) the research to be undertaken towards the degree is substantially the same as that undertaken by the applicant towards the other HDR; and
- (c) the applicant has not submitted for examination a thesis or dissertation based on the research undertaken by the applicant towards the other HDR; and
- (d) the applicant has provided evidence of having made sufficient progress in the other HDR to warrant entry to confirmed candidature.

5.2 An applicant who is approved for admission to a higher degree by research will receive a letter of offer.

5.2.1 An offer of admission is valid for 30 days from the date of issue, after which time the offer will lapse. Upon request in writing by the applicant, within six months from the date of issue of the original offer, the offer may be reinstated with the enrolling unit's approval. An offer cannot be reinstated after six months from the date of issue and the applicant is required to submit an application following the standard application process.

5.3 An applicant who has been denied admission will be advised in writing of that decision and the reason for it.

## 6. Response to offers

6.1 To accept an offer, the applicant must complete acceptance procedures as specified in their Letter of Offer, including payment of all applicable fees.

6.2 Applicants may request a single deferment of commencement. The application for deferral must be reviewed by the relevant Head of enrolling unit and where applicable, USC International, to allow appropriate reconsideration of the availability of resources required for the program.

6.3 International students on a student visa may only request a deferment in exceptional circumstances and will need to liaise with USC International in the first instance.

6.4 Student Services and Engagement enrolls the student from the commencement date and enrolls the student in any coursework components stipulated as a requirement of their program or as a specific condition of candidature. Student Services and Engagement notifies the student of their enrolment in a HDR, including advice of candidature commencement date.

6.5 The Head of enrolling unit and Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, has the right to withdraw an offer for admission or cancel enrolment of any person where an offer was incorrectly made on the basis of incomplete or inaccurate or fraudulent information supplied by the applicant or a certifying authority. Any such decision should take into account equity principles and the amount of time that has elapsed between the admission of the student and the identification of this error.

## 7. Jointly conferred HDR programs

7.1 USC may offer a jointly conferred Higher Degree by Research (HDR) program which enables the candidate to be supervised jointly by academics from two different Universities and upon completion, to be eligible to receive a jointly-badged award. Candidates are normally enrolled concurrently at the two universities for the entire period of their award and must spend at least a total of one year (or one third) of their degree in each university. A candidate would be "on leave" from one University while active at the other.

7.2 Arrangements for admission and all other aspects of candidature, including supervision and examination, must be specified in a legally binding agreement between USC and the partner institution, as negotiated and approved at the time of the relevant program accreditation.

## 8. Fees

8.1 All candidates must pay the Student Services and Amenities Fee. Information about this fee, including payment options, is provided on the university website.

8.2 A candidate's offer letter for admission to HDR candidature will provide advice on their tuition fee liability. Where applicable, a subsequent scholarship offer letter will provide information about fee scholarship including scholarship value, conditions and duration.

8.3 Domestic candidates (Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens and Australian permanent residents) pay tuition fees in accordance with the standard tuition fee schedule, processes and due dates. Information about domestic tuition fees, including payment options, is provided on the university website. Student Services and Engagement (Student Central) provides advice to domestic candidates about their tuition fee liability, including payment options.

8.4 International candidates (candidates other than domestic candidates) pay tuition fees in accordance with approved international tuition fee schedule, processes and due dates. Information about international tuition fees is provided on the university website. International students also pay for their Overseas Student Health Cover. International students on an externally funded scholarship are responsible for liaising with the funding provider for advice about extension to funding (if required).

8.5 Student Services and Engagement (Student Central) provides advice to all students about fee payment options, processes fee payments and follows up on outstanding fees. The student enrolment system provides advice to candidates about fee liability implications throughout candidature as appropriate (e.g. extension requests, change from full-time to part-time, leave of absence). Candidates are responsible for ensuring that they understand their fee liability at all times during candidature.

## 9. Standard of academic and research conduct

9.1 Candidates are expected to undertake their program in accordance with the accepted standards of academic conduct, including the Responsible Research Conduct – Governing Policy. Any form of conduct that is contrary to these standards is misconduct and may be penalised under the Student Academic Integrity - Governing Policy, and/or the Responsible Research Conduct – Governing Policy. The Responsible Research Conduct – Governing Policy applies to all research activities. The Student Academic Integrity – Governing Policy applies to formal coursework components of a higher degree by research.

## 10. Candidate support

10.1 HDR candidates are provided with essential information to undertake their HDR by their supervision panel, their enrolling unit and the Graduate Research School. Commencing candidates are provided with HDR induction materials. In addition:

10.1.1 international students commencing candidature are provided with an International Student Orientation.

10.1.2 students utilising specialist equipment such as laboratories participate in relevant specific inductions as advised by their Principal Supervisor.

10.1.3 commencing candidates must participate in all relevant induction and orientation sessions as advised by their enrolling unit and the Graduate Research School.

10.2 The unit of enrolment and Asset Management Services manage the allocation of space and facilities for HDR students. All full-time candidates who spend the equivalent of a standard working week on campus are allocated a workspace (subject to availability), if requested. Part-time candidates have access to shared work spaces.

10.3 Student Wellbeing offer support to students including (but not limited to) confidential counselling, academic services and disability services.

10.4 Student Services and Engagement provides a range of support services to students including first-instance support to HDR students.

10.5 USC International provides information about maintaining compliance with student visa matters.

10.6 Information Technology Services provides a range of technical services to HDR students.

## 11. Period of candidature

11.1 A candidate is required to maintain a current enrolment throughout their candidature, completing re-enrolment procedures as required, up to the time at which they lodge their thesis or exegesis and creative work for examination or terminate their candidature.

11.2 A candidate enrolled in a HDR may not undertake concurrent coursework study in any program at this or other higher education institution without the permission of Dean, Graduate Research.

11.3 A candidate enrolled in an HDR may not undertake concurrent HDR study in any program at this or other higher education institution.

## 11.4 Duration of program

TABLE 0.1

	Doctoral Degree FTE Duration	Research Masters Degree FTE Duration
Maximum probationary candidature; Minimum program duration	1.5 years	1 year
Maximum program duration (including examination and revisions)	4 years	2 years

The duration of a part-time program is double the full-time equivalent.

11.4.1 If a candidate changes between full-time and part-time candidature, the minimum and maximum submission dates are adjusted pro rata. The principal supervisor is the authority for approval for changes between part-time and full-time enrolment. Scholarship recipients must also comply with the conditions of their scholarship regarding study mode changes.

If a candidate is given credit for work undertaken prior to admission, the minimum and maximum submission dates are adjusted accordingly.

International students on a Student visa must complete program requirements by the program end date listed in their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE).

11.4.2 In exceptional circumstances, a candidate may be given permission by the Dean, Graduate Research to submit their thesis or exegesis and creative work prior to the minimum submission date.

11.4.3 When the candidature is full-time, it is expected that only a limited amount of time will be available for undertaking paid employment. As a general guide, 18 hours of paid employment per week should be the limit. If the student holds a scholarship, the limitation on paid employment may be prescribed in the relevant scholarship conditions booklet. Students on a student visa must check their work rights attached to their student visa.

## 12. Extensions to milestones and candidature

There are two types of extension requests, a Milestone Extension Request and a Candidature Extension Request.

### 12.1 Milestone Extension Request

An extension request that delays the relevant candidature milestone due date within the maximum period of probationary or confirmed candidature. Milestone extension requests are approved by the Dean, Graduate Research.

12.1.1 Milestone extensions will only be approved where the candidate experiences events which have direct impact on the progress of research, and justification for the extension must be provided.

12.1.2 Where an extension is being sought, the extension request must be submitted to the Graduate Research School at least two weeks but not more than three months prior to the milestone due date.

12.1.3 Missed milestones (i.e. not completed by the due date) indicate unsatisfactory progress and may result in the candidate being invited to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated.

### 12.2 Candidature Extension Request

An extension request that extends the maximum duration of probationary or confirmed candidature.

12.2.1 These requests are approved by the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee.

12.2.2 They are only considered for exceptional circumstances and may incur further fee liability (including to students who receive an RTP Fee Offset Scholarship).

12.2.3 Requests for extension of candidature requires the candidate and supervisor to provide an updated plan and undertake a progress review with the completed documentation submitted with the extension request.

12.2.4 Candidates who are unable to achieve a milestone due to a change in personal circumstances (e.g. long-term illness, work commitments) that prevents them from continuing to work on their project should consider taking a leave of absence. Milestone and candidature extensions may not be approved on the basis of personal circumstances or work commitments.

12.2.5 International students must ensure that their visa conditions allow an extension to candidature and may not extend candidature beyond the CRICOS registered duration of their program. Applications for extension to candidature from international students are forwarded to USC International for advice regarding the student's visa status before the extension can be approved.

12.2.6 Students on an externally funded scholarship are responsible for liaising with the funding provider for advice about extension to funding (if required).

## 13. Leave

Leave is categorised as two types. Unless a candidate has been awarded a stipend scholarship and under the conditions of the scholarship there is an entitlement for paid leave, both categories of leave are unpaid.

TABLE o.2

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Standard Leave	Leave which is included as consumed candidacy load and is approved by the supervision panel.
Leave of Absence	Leave that does not alter the consumed candidacy load and is approved by the supervision panel.

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### 13.1 Standard Leave

#### 13.1.1 Sick Leave

In the event of illness, candidates may take up to 10 days of sick leave each year with the approval of their principal supervisor. The leave is accrued throughout candidature. This leave is recorded and managed by the principal supervisor and is not reported to, or managed by, the Graduate Research School.

#### 13.1.2 Recreation Leave

13.1.2.1 Full-time candidates are entitled to a maximum of 20 days per annum. Part-time candidates are entitled to a maximum of 10 days per annum.

13.1.2.2 Recreation leave is arranged by negotiation with the candidate's principal supervisor. This leave is accrued throughout candidature. Recreation leave is recorded and managed by the principal supervisor and is not reported to or managed by the Graduate Research School.

### 13.2 Leave of Absence

13.2.1 HDR candidates can apply for a leave of absence to be approved by the principal supervisor and reported to and recorded by the Graduate Research School.

13.2.2 The total period of leave of absence accumulated in a given candidature will not normally exceed 12 calendar months. A total period in excess of 12 months may be approved by the Principal Supervisor in exceptional circumstances.

13.2.3 HDR candidates applying for parental leave can apply for a maximum period of 12 months for each instance of parental leave. Parental leave is approved by the principal supervisor and is reported to and recorded by the Graduate Research School.

13.2.4 Leave of Absence during the probationary candidature period will only be approved by the Principal Supervisor in exceptional circumstances.

13.2.5 Any Leave of Absence will be reflected in a variation to subsequent milestone due dates and the end date of candidature.

13.2.6 Requests for a Leave of Absence must be submitted to the Graduate Research School at least 3 weeks prior to the first day of the leave.

13.2.7 Retrospective applications will only be approved in exceptional circumstances and medical leave. Leave requests related to ill health must be submitted within 10 days of returning from leave.

13.2.8 Leave beyond 6 months will only be considered if it relates to ill health, significant caring commitments or exceptional circumstances.

13.2.9 Leave requested on medical grounds must be accompanied by a medical certificate.

13.2.10 Requests for parental leave must be accompanied by a medical certificate or an appropriate document containing proof of birth or adoption.

13.2.11 HDR candidates will be assumed to return from leave after an approved leave of absence has ended.

13.2.12 HDR candidates who wish to extend their leave must submit an additional leave request at least 2 weeks prior to their original return date.

13.2.13 Absence without leave may result in administrative withdrawal from the program.

13.2.14 A candidate may not undertake research, study or creative work for the degree during a leave of absence.

13.2.15 Student Services and Engagement provides advice to candidates about implications of leave of absence on fee liability.

13.2.16 International candidates must ensure that their visa conditions allow a suspension of studies (leave of absence can only be approved for compassionate and compelling circumstances). Applications for leave of absence from international students must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation (e.g. medical certificates). Applications for leave of absence will be forwarded to Student Services and Engagement for advice before they can be approved.

13.2.17 Candidates on scholarship should refer to their Schedule of Scholarship Conditions for advice about impacts of leave on their scholarship payments. International students on an externally funded scholarship are responsible for liaising with the funding provider for advice about extension to funding (if required).

### 13.2.18 Leave of Absence Categories:

TABLE O.3

(a) Medical leave	For periods of medical leave beyond the annual allowance of 10 business days. A leave application must be submitted within 10 business days after return from leave with a supporting medical certificate which covers the entire period of medical leave.
(b) Family leave	This leave is used for parental leave and carer's leave. Candidates can take a continuous period of leave of up to 12 months for parental leave and up to 6 months for carer's leave. A medical certificate must be provided in both situations.
(c) Employment	To be used to undertake work commitments. 6-month limit per leave request. Not available for student visa holders.

## 14. Plan and Progress Review (PPR)

14.1 Plan and Progress Review (PPR) is the mechanism by which candidates and their supervisors develop and monitor a tailored research training program to achieve the knowledge, skills and learning outcomes provided in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) for level 9 and 10 degrees.

14.2 A candidate's HDR program will be planned in consultation with their supervision panel within the first two months of full-time equivalent candidature. After this initial plan development, candidates are required to undertake the planning and review process every 6 months for international candidates and every 12 months for domestic candidates. The Principal Supervisor is the authority for approving the plan and progress review and the Dean, Graduate Research is the authority for approving the project's budget

The plan will include:

- (a) a comprehensive research project plan, including a project budget, and
- (b) a progress plan that identifies the key project activities, research training skills development, a plan to achieve conditions of candidature, a publication plan and a supervision panel/student meeting schedule.

14.3 In reviewing a candidate's progress, the candidate and their principal supervisor will:

- (a) review progress made towards the goals set in the previous plan and progress review document
- (b) update goals to reflect changes in the research project
- (c) discuss any gaps in the candidate's research skills or knowledge and identify training requirements
- (d) consider whether the candidate is on track to achieve their next candidature milestone and identify any support or resources required.
- (e) recommend an outcome of the progress plan and review from the below table

TABLE O.4

PPR Outcome	Actions
Exceeds Expectations	Academic progress is satisfactory and the candidate is on track to submit subsequent milestones including thesis submission prior to scheduled milestone due dates.
Meets Expectations	Academic progress is satisfactory and the candidate is on track to meet subsequent milestones including thesis submission, by scheduled milestone due dates.
Needs improvement	Academic progress does not meet expectations at this time and remedial actions are required. The candidate must undertake research and research training activities as specified by the supervision panel and approved by the Dean, Graduate Research. A follow up PPR must be submitted within 3 months to document remedial actions undertaken. A student has a maximum of 6 months from the initial Needs improvement outcome, to achieve an outcome of Meets Expectations, otherwise progress is deemed Unsatisfactory.
Unsatisfactory	The candidate will be invited to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated. Refer to section 21 for information on Response to Show Cause.
Absent without Leave	The candidate has failed to contact or respond to their supervision panel for a period of 1 month or as per the meeting schedule outlined in their latest Plan and Progress Review document. A candidate considered to be Absent without Leave will be invited to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated.

## 15. Confirmation of candidature

This section should be read in conjunction with the 'Higher Degrees by Research Confirmation of Candidature – Guidelines'.



15.1 Candidates are considered “probationary candidates” until they are approved as “confirmed candidates” via the confirmation of candidature process.

15.2 Candidates are eligible to undertake the confirmation process within the following timeframes.

TABLE 0.5

	Full-time	Part-time
Doctoral candidates	3-12 months from date of enrolment	6-24 months date of enrolment
Master candidates	3-9 months from date of enrolment	6-18 months date of enrolment

15.3 Candidates are required to complete the confirmation process by the following timelines.

TABLE 0.6

	Full-time	Part-time
Doctoral candidates	18 months from date of enrolment	36 months date of enrolment
Master candidates	12 months from date of enrolment	24 months date of enrolment

15.4 A candidate may apply for confirmation prior to the confirmation timeframe with the approval of their Principal Supervisor.

15.5 The purpose of this milestone is to ensure that:

- The candidate receives appropriate feedback in relation to the viability and progress of the research project,
- The candidate has sufficient training and that there are resources available to complete the program within the recommended timeframes, and
- Composition of the supervision panel is appropriate.

The candidate is required to prepare a written research proposal for assessment by a review panel. The Principal Supervisor is required to apply text matching software to the candidate’s research proposal prior to submission for confirmation of candidature.

15.6 The review panel includes at least one independent assessor (internal or external) nominated by the principal supervisor and approved by the Head of enrolling unit or delegate, who meet requirements for thesis examiners as described in the Thesis Submission and Examination – Procedures, the candidate’s supervision panel and the Head of enrolling unit or delegate. The independent assessor reviews the research proposal and then provides feedback and a recommendation of outcome as detailed in table 0.7 below, which will inform the decision of the review panel.

15.7 Following feedback from the independent reviewer(s) the candidate is required to:

- a) prepare a response to the reviewer’s feedback
- b) update their plan for the continuation of their research (refer to undertake the planning and review process outlined in section 14) and
- c) present their research proposal to the review panel. This may be done in person or by video conferencing.

15.8 The review panel will provide feedback to the candidate on their research proposal as part of the confirmation process. Following the confirmation presentation, the Head of enrolling unit or delegate will determine the outcome as one of the following:

TABLE 0.7

Outcome	Actions
(a) Exceeds Expectations	Candidature is confirmed, with the supervision arrangements confirmed and the thesis title approved. Academic progress is satisfactory, and the candidate is on track to submit subsequent milestones including thesis submission prior to scheduled milestone due dates Where judged to be appropriate, a probationary Masters candidate may be offered the opportunity to be admitted as a confirmed candidate to one of the university’s research Doctoral degrees.
(b) Meets Expectations	Candidature is confirmed, with the supervision arrangements confirmed and the thesis title approved. Academic progress is satisfactory, and the candidate is on track to meet subsequent milestones including thesis submission, by scheduled milestone due dates. Minor adjustments to the proposed research may be required which can be made during confirmed candidature (without the need for revision and resubmission of the written research proposal).
(c) Needs Improvement	Candidature is not confirmed. The candidate is required to continue enrolment as a probationary candidate to revise the written research proposal and where applicable, to undertake further research work or training in accordance with the detailed feedback provided by the review panel. The candidate is required to complete revisions to the satisfaction of the review panel within the remaining period of probationary candidature. If the

candidate does not complete the confirmation process to the satisfaction of the review panel before probationary candidature expires, the candidate will receive a confirmation outcome of Unsatisfactory.

- (d) Unsatisfactory Where a candidate's application for progression to confirmed candidature is assessed Unsatisfactory, the Head of School or Head of School delegate will determine whether to: (i) where judged to be appropriate, a probationary doctoral candidate may be offered the opportunity to be admitted as a confirmed candidate to one of the university's research Master degrees; or (ii) invite the candidate to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated. Refer to section 21 for information on Response to Show Cause.
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The enrolling unit submits the confirmation paperwork to the Graduate Research School for quality assurance and retention on the candidate's student file.

15.9 The Dean, Graduate Research is the authority for approval for the operational budget associated with the candidate's confirmed research plan. Required adjustments will be returned to the Head of enrolling unit or delegate.

15.10 The Graduate Research School communicates the outcome of the confirmation process to the candidate.

15.11 A probationary candidate must be approved as a confirmed candidate by the Head of enrolling unit or delegate before they can proceed with their Higher Degree by Research program.

## 16. Candidature at external locations

16.1 A candidate proposing to undertake all or part of their research, study or creative work at a location external to this university must seek the approval of the Head of enrolling unit. On the recommendation of the principal supervisor, the relevant Head of School may approve a candidate's request to pursue part of their program of research, study or creative work away from the university and will provide advice to the candidate, copied to the Graduate Research School for retention on the relevant student file for insurance purposes.

16.2 Where the research, study or creative work requires the resources or facilities of an external organisation, the candidate's access to such resources or facilities must be documented in written correspondence to the satisfaction of the Head of enrolling unit.

16.3 In approving candidature wholly or partly at an external location, the Head of enrolling unit will appoint a consultant supervisor from the relevant organisation and may specify a minimum period during which the candidate must attend this university.

## 17. Transfer between Doctoral and Research Master degrees

17.1 Student Services and Engagement provides advice to candidates about implications of transfer between Doctoral and Research Master degrees on fee liability. International students on a student visa must ensure they maintain their student visa conditions.

17.2 Where a candidate has not yet progressed to confirmed candidature, the confirmation and program transfer processes can be considered simultaneously. The candidate includes their request to change program on their confirmation documentation and the application to transfer program is considered as part of the confirmation process.

17.3 A confirmed candidate must present a research proposal for confirmed candidature of the length and standard that would be expected for the proposed degree. The review process for confirmation of candidature should be applied.

17.4 The Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee may approve:

17.4.1 an application to convert a confirmed master candidature to an unconfirmed doctoral candidature. The period completed as a master candidate will be deducted from the candidature duration for the purpose of determining the minimum and maximum length of the doctoral candidature.

17.4.2 an application to convert a doctoral candidature to a candidature in a research master program. The period completed as a doctoral candidate will be deducted from the candidature duration for the purpose of determining the minimum and maximum length of the master candidature.

## 18. Change of research topic and or thesis title

18.1 If, following confirmation of candidature, a candidate wishes to change the topic of their research work to any significant extent, the candidate must submit an application to the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, via the principal supervisor, who must support the application for a change of research topic. In making a decision to change the candidate's research topic, the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee will also determine whether the candidate is to be returned to probationary status and to undergo a standard or modified process for confirmation of candidature and must determine any adjustment to the maximum thesis submission date. Where the change of research topic has been substantially addressed in conjunction with the initial confirmation process, the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, may determine that the change of research topic be approved without a change to the candidate's confirmation status or maximum thesis submission date.

18.2 With the approval of the principal supervisor, a candidate may change the title of their thesis from the title approved when their candidature was confirmed. Providing that the change of thesis title is not indicative of a significant change in the research topic, a change of thesis title does not require the approval of the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee.

## 19. HDR Publication

19.1 If any component of a candidate's research has not been published after completion of the HDR, the supervisor(s) may publish the research, provided appropriate authorship is attributed to the candidate, subject to a documented agreement to transfer any intellectual property from the candidate to the university. This does not apply in the case of Creative Works, such as literary works, artworks, audio-visual presentations or performance rights. Candidates are encouraged to seek independent legal advice before signing an agreement to assign their intellectual property to the university. Supervisors and students are required to follow all relevant USC Policies and Procedures including the Intellectual Property: Student IP – Procedures and the Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings – Procedures.

## 20. Withdrawal from candidature

20.1 A candidate may withdraw from candidature by informing the Graduate Research School using the appropriate form.

20.2 The withdrawal will take effect from the date of receipt of such notification.

## 21. Response to an invitation to show cause

21.1 A student who is invited to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated should prepare a written response as described in Stage 2 of the Student Review and Appeals – Procedures. A response to a request to show cause why candidature should not be terminated may include (but is not limited to):

- (a) an updated plan and progress review document with revised goals and evidence of research training undertaken,
- (b) a statement summarising obstacles to progress, and the candidate's recommendation for a path forward
- (c) medical certificates (if applicable).

21.2 Candidates are encouraged to seek advice from academic skills advisors available via Student Services and Engagement (Student Central), to discuss their situation and to develop their response. Candidates may also seek counselling from Student Wellbeing, advice on the processes from the Student Ombudsman, and/or assistance from the Student Guild.

21.3 The Head of enrolling unit considers the representations of the candidate in response to the show cause request and determines whether to:

- (a) Continue candidature, with any subsequent conditions; or
- (b) Recommend termination of candidature to the Dean, Graduate Research.

21.4 All completed documentation is sent to the Graduate Research School for quality assurance and to report all outcomes of invitations to show cause to the Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee, as part of regular candidature progression reporting.

21.5 In the case of international students on a student visa, the university is obliged to advise students that termination of their candidature will result in them being reported to the relevant Government departments for unsatisfactory progress and may result in the cancellation of their student visa, unless they can demonstrate compassionate or compelling circumstances. The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (the 'National Code') requires that when the university notifies a student of its intention to report the student for not achieving satisfactory academic progress, the student must also be informed that they are able to access the university's 'complaints and appeals process' and have 20 business days in which to do so. Responding to the show cause is deemed to be accessing this process, as per Stage 2 of the Student Grievance Resolution – Governing Policy.

## 22. Termination of candidature

22.1 The Dean, Graduate Research considers the representations of the candidate in response to the show cause request together with the recommendation to terminate candidature made by the Head of enrolling unit. The Dean, Graduate Research may terminate candidature if:

- (a) the student has failed to:
  - respond to the invitation to show cause within the specified timeframe; or
  - make satisfactory progress or meet any candidature requirements; or
  - comply with any other condition imposed by their Head of enrolling unit or Research Degrees Committee, or Chairperson acting on behalf of the committee; and
- (b) the principal supervisor and the Head of enrolling unit or Head of School delegate have ensured and demonstrated that the student has been:
  - clearly warned of shortcomings in performing the research and/or in meeting candidature requirements; and
  - advised of ways in which such shortcomings might be remedied.

22.2 The Dean, Graduate Research will determine whether to:

- (a) permit the student to continue under specified conditions; or

(b) terminate the candidature.

22.2.1 A Doctoral student may be offered the opportunity to be admitted to one of the university's research Master degrees.

22.3 The Dean, Graduate Research will provide advice to the student and the relevant Head of enrolling unit within 5 business days of the determination.

22.4 A student whose candidature is terminated may lodge an internal appeal under Stage 3 of the Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy, via the Student Review and Appeals – Procedures, where they can show grounds as to why an appeal should be considered (i.e. new information, evidence of failure of process). Appeals must be lodged within 10 business days of the notice of the Dean, Graduate Research's determination.

22.5 The student's enrolment will cease at the end of the appeal period or if an appeal is lodged, when the outcome of their appeal is determined.

## 23. Grievances

Refer to the Student Grievance Resolution – Governing Policy and associated Procedures.

23.1 Candidates experiencing difficulty with any aspect of their enrolment or program of study should discuss the problems with their principal supervisor or a co-supervisor in the first instance.

23.2 Where the issue cannot be resolved at the supervisor level, or where the candidate does not wish to discuss the matter with their supervisors (e.g. in the event of a breakdown in the supervisory relationship), the matter should be brought to the relevant Head of enrolling unit for resolution.

23.3 A candidate who has a grievance concerning any action or decision of a supervisor, or any other member of staff, and is unable to reach a satisfactory resolution through informal discussions and conciliation, as described in 23.1-23.2, may lodge a formal grievance under the Student Grievance Resolution – Governing Policy and associated procedures.

23.4 Candidates will be invited to provide anonymous feedback each year via the annual HDR Candidate survey.

## Appendix 1

HDR Roles and Responsibilities

END

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### RELATED DOCUMENTS

Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings - Procedures  
Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy  
Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Procedures  
Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Submission and Examination - Procedures  
Intellectual Property: Student IP - Procedures  
Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct - Procedures  
Research Training Program Scholarships - Operational Policy  
Responsible Research Conduct - Governing Policy  
Selection of Students for Commonwealth ISSP Scholarships - Procedures  
Student Academic Misconduct - Procedures  
Student Conduct - Governing Policy  
Student Fees and Charges - Governing Policy  
Student Grievance Resolution - Governing Policy  
Student Review and Appeals - Procedures

### LINKED DOCUMENTS

Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy

### SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

Higher Degrees by Research - Procedures

### RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

Higher Education Support Act 2003  
Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)  
Australian Qualifications Framework  
National Code of Practice Providers of Education ... Overseas Students  
Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2017

[usc.edu.au/policy](http://usc.edu.au/policy)