

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

- (1) This policy states the objectives and standards of the University of Canberra (the University) for:
- a. design and delivery of higher degree by research (HDR) courses;
 - b. admission to HDR courses accredited by the University; and
 - c. HDR candidature from recruitment to graduation.

Section 2 - Scope

- (2) This policy applies to:
- a. HDR courses other than honorary doctorates which are within the designation of Council;
 - b. HDR candidates;
 - c. staff who manage HDR candidature or who support, supervise or examine HDR candidates;
 - d. academic managers responsible for overseeing HDR candidature;
 - e. members of academic committees responsible for governing and overseeing HDR candidature; and
 - f. people external to the University who are engaged to assist in assessment and examination of the HDR candidates research progress and final thesis.

Section 3 - Procedure

- (3) The following procedures support this Policy:
- a. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Procedure; and
 - b. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Scholarships (Including RTP-Funded Scholarships) Procedure.

Section 4 - Principles

- (4) Design and delivery of HDR courses offered by the University will meet the following external standards and comply with the following regulatory requirements:
- a. They will be consistent with the levels of skills and knowledge, and qualification specifications stated by the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) for the qualification to which the course leads.
 - b. They will meet the standards of the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) relevant to research training courses.
 - c. Decisions about admission, enrolment and candidature of HDR candidates who are studying on an Australian student visa will comply with the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) and the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#).

(5) HDR courses will enable candidates to:

- a. acquire and demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) for the level of award to which the course leads; and
- b. develop the skills needed for success in a career as a researcher, as described in the University of Canberra [Researcher Development Skills Framework](#).

Admission principles and standards

(6) Admission to a HDR course is determined following an assessment by an Admissions Officer of an application against the admission requirements for research students set out in Rule 9(2) of the [University of Canberra \(Admission\) Rules 2022](#).

(7) The admission requirements consider academic merit, research potential and the research supervision and facilities available to support the applicants research. The Academic Board determines the specific admission requirements applicable to each HDR course that a student must meet to satisfy Rule 9(2)(c) and 9(2)(k) of the [University of Canberra \(Admission\) Rules 2022](#).

(8) For admission to a HDR course, international applicants must satisfy any additional requirements determined by the Australian Government, including in relation to immigration.

(9) When assessing a prospective candidate's application against the Admission Requirements in Rule 9(2) of the [University of Canberra \(Admission\) Rules 2022](#), the University may consider the following in determining whether a student satisfies the Admission Requirements:

- a. academic merit and research experience;
- b. English language proficiency;
- c. prior experience, both academic and professional;
- d. alignment of the prospective candidates intended research topic with areas of the universities research focus; and
- e. any other factors the university considers relevant.

Admission decisions and outcomes

(10) Admission is at the discretion of the University. Following an assessment against the admission requirements, an Admissions Officer may make one of the following admission decisions:

- a. unconditional offer;
- b. conditional offer;
- c. packaged offer;
- d. an offer into an alternative course; or
- e. no offer (rejection).

(11) The Admissions Officer must make an offer in writing and provide all necessary information as set out in Rule 14(3) of the [University of Canberra \(Admission\) Rules 2022](#).

(12) Applicants who have received an offer may request to defer their offer for up to 12 months. Not all offers can be deferred and not all deferrals will be approved.

(13) The university can rescind an offer of admission if:

- a. the offer was made in error;
- b. the course is no longer offered;
- c. the applicant does not meet legislative requirements, such as requirements of a student visa; or
- d. the applicant behaves in a way that may be considered a breach of the [University of Canberra \(Student Conduct\) Rules 2023](#).

(14) The Dean, Graduate Research School in consultation with Faculties, has responsibility for determining equivalencies between research admission requirements and specific qualifications or tests.

(15) For applicants to HDR courses, Admissions Officers may approve an application for admission on the basis that the student has been granted a qualifying award or otherwise has sufficient academic or professional experience in an area of research suitable for the purposes of admission.

Resourcing

(16) The University will endeavor to ensure that each candidate:

- a. has the physical facilities and financial support necessary for their research;
- b. has support to maintain their wellbeing during their candidature; and
- c. is able to participate in the research culture at the University.

(17) Where a candidate has a disability or health condition, or who has primary caring responsibilities for a person with disability, they may apply to the University for adjustments or support in alignment with the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#). A candidate's reasonable adjustment and/or necessary supports will be recorded in a Reasonable Adjustment Plan and/or HDR support letter.

(18) Australian Government [Research Training Program](#) Scholarships will be allocated and managed in accordance with the [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines \(Research\) 2017](#).

(19) The University is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake higher degrees by research and ensuring that the research is supervised with sensitivity to the candidate's culture.

Supervision

(20) Candidates' research projects will be well supervised throughout candidature by an appropriately qualified supervisory panel:

- a. who are active researchers in a discipline relevant to the research project; and
- b. have no significant conflict of interest in supervising the candidate.

(21) Each candidate will have a supervisory panel comprising:

- a. a primary supervisor who is a member of the University's staff and holds a doctoral degree;
- b. at least one secondary supervisory who is a member of the University's staff, and who holds a doctoral degree or a combination of qualifications and research experience equivalent to a doctoral degree; and
- c. external supervisors or advisors who are not members of the University's staff, including emeritus professors, adjuncts, cultural or community advisors, and industry partners, as appropriate.

Responsible conduct of research

(22) Before a candidate begins their research, they will successfully complete training on responsible conduct of research (as described in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#)).

(23) Candidates are expected, in their research practice and research outputs, to adhere to the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#). A candidate's breach of that code may constitute misconduct as defined by the [University of Canberra \(Student Conduct\) Rules 2023](#) and may warrant penalties in accordance with those Rules.

Enrolment

(24) Candidates may not enroll into units unless an offer of a place in an appropriate HDR course has been made and accepted by the student.

(25) HDR courses may consist of coursework and thesis units.

(26) Candidates are responsible for ensuring they are correctly enrolled in units by the self-enrolment cut-off date advertised for the relevant teaching period.

(27) Candidates are responsible for ensuring that they are correctly enrolled in the units which will contribute to the completion of the course in which candidates are enrolled.

(28) The units a candidate enrolls in must form part of the course in which the candidate is enrolled – unless a variation to course requirements has been approved.

(29) Candidates are expected to 'self-enrol' in the appropriate units electronically via their MyUC account.

(30) To retain their enrolment at the University all HDR candidates must be enrolled in at least one unit each semester, unless the candidate submitted their thesis, or has approved leave or an intermission.

(31) A candidate who is not enrolled in a unit by the census date of each semester will be discontinued.

(32) Candidates discontinued for non-enrolment cease to be students of the University and must reapply for admission if they wish to resume their studies.

Milestones and progress

(33) Candidates may be required to have completed specific coursework units prior to confirmation of their candidature.

(34) Details of the coursework units that are required for each course are published on the University website under 'Course Requirements' section of the university website.

(35) Where a candidate's proposed research is assessed as unsatisfactory for candidature, their candidature may be terminated.

(36) Where a doctoral candidate's proposed research is assessed as insufficient for doctoral candidature, but sufficient for master by research candidature, they may be offered transfer to a master by research course.

Monitoring

(37) Candidates' progress in their coursework units and research project will be monitored regularly via:

- a. their grades in their coursework units, and
- b. a progress report completed at least bi-annually by the candidate and their supervisors, and
- c. completion of progress milestones.

Unsatisfactory progress

(38) Where a candidate's progress is unsatisfactory, the candidate:

- a. will be invited to take part in developing a Progress Support Agreement (PSA), to identify what support is needed and what actions the candidate needs to take to resume satisfactory progress, or
- b. may be placed on academic probation by the process stated in the [University of Canberra \(Academic Progress\) Rules 2022](#).

(39) Where a candidate is placed on academic probation and does not meet the conditions of their probation, their candidature may be discontinued.

Thesis examination

(40) When a candidate submits their thesis for examination, it will be examined by at least two appropriately qualified examiners external to the University who have no significant perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest in examining the work.

Section 5 - Responsibilities

WHO	RESPONSIBILITIES
University Research Committee (URC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overseeing the quality of HDR courses and the candidature experience of HDR candidates, to ensure that these are consistent with the principles of this policy.
Graduate Research Committee (GRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supporting the URC by overseeing HDR students' candidature to ensure compliance with this policy and its supporting procedures.
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Delegating its authority to make certain academic decisions in relation to HDR candidature according to the Delegations of Authority Schedule under the Delegations of Authority Policy.
Faculties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nominating one or more staff members to be appointed as HDR Officers.Through the Faculty's Board of Examiners, deciding the final grades to be awarded to HDR candidates in coursework units managed by the Faculty, and reporting these grades to the Graduate Research Committee.
Faculty HDR Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Making recommendations to the Dean, Graduate Research School regarding HDR candidates hosted by their faculty as outlined in this Policy, the Higher Degree by Research Procedure, and the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Scholarships (Including RTP-Funded Scholarships) Procedure.
Deputy Vice-Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Acting as the Admissions Review Officer for applicants for admission to HDR courses, for the purposes of the University of Canberra (Admission) Rules 2022.On the recommendation of the Dean, Graduate Research School, deciding if a candidate should not be awarded the degree following the outcome of their thesis examination.Approving exceptions to this Policy or its supporting procedures to accommodate other institutions' requirements for HDR awards or HDR candidature when entering dual degree or joint award agreements, ONLY IF:<ul style="list-style-type: none">they are satisfied that the dual degree or joint award and candidature for it will be of a similar standard to when the same award is offered entirely by the University of Canberra; andthe exception is reported to Graduate Research Committee and University Research Committee.

WHO	RESPONSIBILITIES
Dean, Graduate Research School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For HDR matters, acting as the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Admissions Officer, for the purposes of the University of Canberra (Admission) Rules 2022; ◦ Enrolment Officer, for the purposes of the Enrolment Policy; and ◦ Academic Progress Officer, for the purposes of the University of Canberra (Academic Progress) Rules 2022. • Overseeing and managing HDR candidature, in collaboration with faculty HDR Officers. • Maintaining instructions, forms and templates for processes in relation to HDR admission, candidature and establishing and awarding HDR scholarships. • Recommending to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor whether or not a candidate should be awarded a degree following the outcome of their thesis examination. • Deciding final grades awarded to HDR candidates in coursework units managed by the Graduate Research School, on the recommendation of the Higher Degrees by Research Assessment Board. • Deciding, on the recommendation of the relevant faculty HDR Officer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ whether to register a staff member or external person as eligible to supervise an HDR candidate; ◦ whether to remove a registered supervisor from eligibility to be a primary supervisor, where there is evidence that the person is not performing satisfactorily as a primary supervisor; ◦ on the appointment of supervisors for a candidate, and changes to a candidate's panel of supervisors; ◦ whether to confirm a candidate in their candidature; ◦ an exception, for an individual candidate, to the minimum duration of candidature for an HDR course; ◦ whether a candidate may transfer from a research master course to a doctoral course or vice versa, or from one doctoral course to another; ◦ whether to grant a candidate's request for leave from candidature of types that extend the duration of candidature; ◦ whether to grant a candidate's request for intermission; ◦ whether a candidate may continue their candidature beyond the normal maximum duration of candidature; ◦ the external examiners of a candidate's thesis; and ◦ the outcome of examination of a candidate's thesis where all examiners recommend awarding the degree (with or without corrections or revisions). • Deciding, on the advice of panels of members of Graduate Research Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ allocation of Research Training Program Scholarships and other HDR scholarships open to candidates from any faculty; ◦ whether to place a candidate who has unsatisfactory progress on a Progress Support Agreement (PSA) or academic probation; ◦ whether a candidate who has been placed on academic probation, and has not met a condition of the probation, can continue (and if so, on what conditions) or will have candidature be terminated; and ◦ where an examiner of an HDR candidate's thesis has recommended that the candidate revise and resubmit their thesis for examination, what the outcome of examination will be (other than not to award the degree). • Deciding, on the recommendation of Executive Deans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ the admission of an applicant to an HDR course, where their faculty is willing to host the candidature; ◦ the establishment of an HDR scholarship specific to their faculty; and ◦ the award to a candidate of an HDR scholarship specific to their faculty. • Approve an exception to a requirement of the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Procedure or Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Scholarships (Including RTP-Funded Scholarships) Procedure, provided that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ the decision is consistent with any relevant Rule or Council delegation of authority; and ◦ the Dean, Graduate Research School reports the exception to the following meeting of Graduate Research Committee and University Research Committee.

Section 6 - Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Academic Probation	As defined in the University of Canberra (Academic Progress) Rules 2022 .
Admission	As defined in the Admission (Coursework) Policy .
Candidate	A student enrolled in a course leading to an HDR award.

TERM	DEFINITION
Candidature	The period of a candidate's enrolment in their HDR course.
Course	As defined in the University of Canberra Courses and Awards (Courses of Study) Rules 2023 .
Coursework	Of a unit, that the unit requires the student to undertake specific learning activities and assessment tasks, rather than being the record of enrolment for a candidate's research project.
Faculty HDR Officer	A staff member nominated to make recommendations on HDR matters for a faculty.
Graduate Research	Where this phrase is not part of the name of a committee or a position title, means the Graduate Research School.
Higher Degree by Research (HDR)	A master by research degree or doctoral degree (a Doctor of Philosophy, higher doctorate or professional doctorate).
Host	Of a faculty, in relation to an HDR candidate, the faculty in which the candidate is enrolled and which manages aspects of the candidature.
Intermission	As defined in the Enrolment Policy .
Master by Research	A master degree awarded for successful completion of a course in which at least 67 per cent of the volume of learning required to complete the course is a research project.
Supervisor	In relation to HDR candidature, someone who guides and advises a candidate in undertaking their research project, and who monitors their progress in their candidature.
Terminate	In relation to an HDR candidate, discontinue their enrolment in their course.
Thesis	The body of work that an HDR candidate submits for examination and to communicate the outcomes and findings of their research project. The Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Procedure defines what work may be considered a thesis.
Unit	As defined in the University of Canberra Courses and Awards (Courses of Study) Rules 2023 .

Status and Details

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