**COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT ADMINISTRATION THAT CANDIDATES PERPETUALLY ASK**

**by Simon Moss**

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| **Introduction** |

Supervisors like to answer questions about their research—about enchanting theories, arcane methods, statistical advances, or philosophical debates. But, instead, they often receive questions about policies, procedures, and paperwork. In response to these questions, some supervisors merely instruct candidates to access the web or read the relevant policies or procedures. However, if supervisors can answer some of these questions

* candidates will feel more supported by their supervisor, sometimes increasing their confidence and productivity
* candidates might squander less time, especially while the CDU website is undergoing development
* candidates will be more informed because, relative to policies and procedures, the information that supervisors convey is often more nuanced and tailored to the needs of candidates

This document was designed to help supervisors answer questions about administration without the need to search the website or contact anyone else. We collated the most common questions that research candidates ask their supervisors. Over time, we will extend this list in response to feedback. At the moment, these questions revolve around

* study hours, paid work, and leave entitlements
* funding, resources, and scholarships
* supervision
* confirmation of candidature, progress, and extensions
* training and support
* insurance

**Notes on definitions**

Colleges refers to the six colleges at CDU or the Menzies School of Health.

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| **Work hours, paid work, and leave entitlements** |

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| Question | Answer |
| **Study hours** |  |
| How many hours am I supposed to dedicate to my course? | Full-time candidates should dedicate about 37 hours a week to their course on average. Part-time candidates should dedicate about half this time to their course. |
| Can I shift my status from full time to part time | If you want to shift from full time to part time, complete the relevant form, available on the web. Usually, these requests will be approved except   * Besides exceptional circumstances, you cannot study part time if supported by an RTP stipend * You cannot study part time if living in Australia on a candidate visa (Subclass 500) |
| **Paid work** |  |
| How many hours a week or fortnight am I permitted to work? | Once you commence your PhD or Masters by Research, work hours are not limited—for either domestic or international research candidates.  Nevertheless, if granted an RTP scholarship, you cannot earn wages that exceed more than 75% of this amount |
| If I am an international candidate on a candidate visa (Subclass 500), when can I begin paid work? When can my family begin paid work | Both you and your family can begin paid work as soon as your course commences |
| **Leave** |  |
| How many days of recreation leave am I entitled to? | 20 days a year for full-time candidates, and 10 days a year for part-time candidates |
| How many sick days leave am I entitled to? | 10 days a year—or more if you can supply a medical certificate. |
| How many days of parental leave am I entitled to? | Parents or primary carers are entitled to 12 months or less leave for a newborn or adopted child. However, international candidates should confirm their eligibility for this leave. |
| Can I suspend my enrolment temporarily | You can apply for a leave of absence for up to one year for PhD candidates and six months for Masters by Research candidates. This leave of absence needs to be approved by the College Dean or delegate. |
| If on a leave of absence, can I access my CDU email and library | Yes. |
| Can I study outside Australia? | To some extent. Here are some limitations   * If you are an international candidate, you should contact Global to check your visa conditions. PhD and Masters by Research candidates are not usually permitted to study outside Australia for more than 12 months or 6 months respectively * If you are a permanent resident, but not a citizen, you should also check your conditions to ascertain how long you can live outside Australia * Australian citizens can study outside Australia   Nevertheless, candidates who want to study, rather than merely travel, outside Australia should first seek approval from [research.degrees@cdu.edu.au](mailto:research.degrees@cdu.edu.au). The reason is that CDU needs to determine whether you will receive the necessary support. For example, CDU will ascertain whether   * you have organised a relevant local supervisor—essential if you need to interact with agencies or participants in other nations * you can access the necessary resources, such as laboratory space or the internet * you have arranged to contact your principal supervisor at regular times—to monitor your safety, progress, and needs * you are able to participate in the research culture of this university or a comparable university |

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| **Funding, resources, and scholarships** |

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| Question | Answer |
| **Funding and resources** |  |
| How do I seek funding to attend conferences or participate in other development opportunities? | Your college is granted some money that is intended to support conferences and other development opportunities. The procedures vary across colleges. Contact the HDR convener in your college for more information. |
| To publish in some journals, the authors need to pay. How can I seek funding for these payments? | Your college is granted some money that is intended to support payments for publications. You are more likely to receive up to $2500 if the journal is high in quality—such as Q1 in the SCImago list—and no other suitable alternatives are available. |
| How do I know in which college I am enrolled? | By default, you are enrolled in the college of your primary supervisor. |
| Can I shift the college in which I am enrolled without changing my supervisor? | In exceptional circumstances perhaps. But few candidates ever need to shift to another college. |
| **Scholarships** |  |
| If I study part time, can I still retain my RTP scholarship | Only in exceptional circumstances—typically a medical condition or exception caring commitment that precludes full time study. |
| Can I enrol in units or courses at other universities simultaneously | Only if approved by your College Dean or delegate and consistent with your visa requirements. |

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| **Supervision** |

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| Question | Answer |
| Can one or more of my supervisors be employees of other institutions? | Yes. |
| Are supervisors employed at other institutions paid by CDU | Besides exceptional circumstances, these supervisors are not paid. They are paid by their own institution, but might be willing to supervise you because they are interested in your project or want to supervise more candidates. |
| Can my principal supervisor be an employee of another institution | Usually not. The role of principal supervisors is partly to help you navigate the procedures and practices of the university—and therefore need to be familiar with university procedures and practices. |

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| **Confirmation of candidature, progress reports, and extensions** |

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| Question | Answer |
| **Confirmation of candidature** |  |
| When do I need to complete the first phase: confirmation of candidature | If full-time, you should complete your confirmation of candidature within the first 6 months of a PhD and 4 months of a Masters by Research. If part-time, you might need twice as long |
| What are the consequences if I do not complete the confirmation of candidature in this time | Usually, nobody will be too concerned if you postpone this deadline one to three months. But, if delayed longer, the College or University might formally question your progress in the progress report. |
| What does the confirmation of candidature involve? | You need to have completed   * the supervision agreement with your supervisor * a research proposal, comprising 7000 to 10000 words for PhDs and 5000 to 7000 words for Masters by Research   In the past, candidates would also need to complete an oral defence of their research proposal. Some colleges may still prefer that candidates complete some oral presentation as well. |
| What are some common problems or shortcomings of research proposals that panels might identify? | In general, the main problems are that   * The project demands expertise that neither the candidate nor supervisory panel has acquired or could readily acquire * The project plan is too ambitious to be completed within the allocated time—and the project, if truncated to an appropriate degree, would no longer be original and significant enough * The university will not be able to supply the resources that are needed to complete the project within the allocated budget * The project generates ethical, legal, or safety concerns that are likely to be unresolvable * The candidate demonstrates a comprehensive, but not necessarily exhaustive, understanding of the relevant literature * This purpose of this research is clear, unique, and important * The methods the candidate has proposed could reasonably achieve this purpose |
| What happens if the panel do not approve the research proposal? | Typically, you will be asked to modify and refine the research proposal. |
| Can I modify and submit the research proposal as many times as necessary? | Technically yes. But, if the panel rejects the research proposal more than once, other procedures are usually initiated to assess the source of these problems. Furthermore, the College or University might formally question your progress in the progress report. |
| Can I change my research topic after the confirmation of candidature? | If you change your research topic substantially—for example, if you change your field of research or shift from qualitative research to quantitative research—you should inform your College Dean or delegate. This person might then arrange a panel of academics to evaluate this change  If you are an Iranian citizen, you cannot change your research topic—unless approved by the Department of Home Affairs. Seek advice from the International Office on how to organize this change. |
| **Progress reports** |  |
| What happens if my supervisors express concerns about my progress in the annual progress report? | If the concerns are mild, supervisors and candidates will be encouraged to discuss these issues themselves.  If the concerns are more pronounced, the College Dean or delegate might discuss these concerns with the supervisors and candidates. One outcome might be to construct a plan that specifies the goals the candidate should achieve in the next three to six months. |
| What happens if I am unable to achieve the goals that are stipulated in this plan to progress? | The Dean of Graduate Studies is likely to intervene. In some circumstances, the candidates might receive a show cause notice in which they need to explain why they should be granted the opportunity to continue. But candidates will receive many opportunities to demonstrate their dedication or capacity before they receive this show cause notice |
| **Period of candidature and extensions** |  |
| By when do I need to submit my thesis? | PhD candidates must submit their theses within 4 years full time equivalent. Masters by Research candidates must submit their thesis within 2 years full time. This time does not include parental leave or leave of absences. |
| If I cannot submit on time, can I seek an extension. | You can seek an extension. However, PhD candidates cannot receive an extension beyond 12 months full time; Masters by Research candidates cannot receive an extension beyond 6 months full time. |
| What happens if I cannot submit by the end of this extension period | You could seek a leave of absence for up to one year for PhD candidates and six months for Masters by Research candidates. After this time, your candidature will typically be discontinued. In exceptional circumstances, however, the Board of Graduate Studies can approve a further extension. |
| If my candidature is discontinued, can I still complete and submit my thesis | Often, provided you are a domestic candidate. Some activities, such as data collection, cannot be completed if you are not enrolled. Other activities, such as data analysis and writing, can be completed if you are not enrolled.  As soon as you feel you can complete and submit your thesis soon, such as within the next month, you can attempt to reenrol. |
| Is my application to enrol likely to be accepted? | If the Dean of Graduate Studies believes you are likely to submit soon and you had been enrolled within the last two years, your enrolment is likely to be approved. However, if you had discontinued more than two years ago, the Dean of Graduate Studies will need to consider other issues, such as whether your supervisor is still available |
| **Shifting courses** |  |
| Can I shift from a Masters by Research to a PhD | Potentially. You can apply for an upgrade. Usually, within the first year, you need to have demonstrated a significant contribution, such as a submitted journal article. You also need to construct a plan that shows the research is suitable for a PhD. |
| **Examinations** |  |
| Are the examiners paid to evaluate the thesis | For PhD theses, each examiner receives $462; for Masters by Research theses, each examiner receives $260 |

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| **Training and support** |

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| Question | Answer |
| **English support** |  |
| Does the degree and thesis have to be completed in English? | Usually yes. In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Graduate Studies might approve another language however. |
| Can I receive support on how to improve my English? | You can. Proceed to [www.cdu.edu.au/academic-language-learning/allsp/make-an-appointment](http://www.cdu.edu.au/academic-language-learning/allsp/make-an-appointment). Then   * Click the button "Book for English language support" * Click "create a new user account"--and follow the instructions to create an account. * Once you create an account, follow the instructions to book an appointment. If you experience problems, seek help from a supervisor or peer. |
| **Research enhancement program** |  |
| Do I have to attend any coursework or workshops? | You need to attend five training modules—organized as part of a suite of activities called the Research Enhancement Program. |
| What do these modules involve? | These modules include a range of topics that are relevant to research and careers such as   * Software to analyse data * Research ethics and integrity * Resilience and career development * Library and IT skills * Writing, planning, and presentation skills |
| Can I choose other workshops instead? | You can seek approval to attend other workshops instead—such as workshops that are more relevant to your project. Most candidates, however, will complete the five modules and then additional workshops later. |
| When do I need to complete these modules | Ideally, you would complete these modules in the first year. Some PhD candidates, however, complete the modules in the second year. |
| **Three-minute thesis competition** |  |
| Is this competition, in which you need to present your thesis in three minutes, compulsory? | No |
| Why should I complete in this competition? | If you complete   * You will publicize your work and thus potentially networks for the future * You will be able refer to this experience when applying for jobs—especially jobs that involve presenting * You will develop vital skills in confidence and presenting * You can earn prizemoney. If you win the CDU competition, you earn $1500? |
| Can anyone compete? | You need to be enrolled in a PhD and have completed your confirmation of candidature |

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| **Insurance** |

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| Question | Answer |
| **Overseas Candidate Health Cover** |  |
| If I am an international candidate, do I need to organize health insurance | You need to maintain Overseas Candidate Health Cover |
| How do I organize this health insurance? | CDU utilizes Allianz Global Assistance to organize health insurance cover. However, you can contact other providers to arrange equivalent health cover |
| What does this insurance cover? | Basic Overseas Candidate Health Cover subsidies or pays visits to a general practitioner, some hospital treatment, emergency ambulance cover, and some medicines. You can purchase additional cover if you chose. |
| If I am an international candidate, I am covered at all by Medicare | Usually, Medicare—the cover that all Australian residents receive—does not apply to international candidates. But candidates from the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Slovenia, Italy and New Zealand, are covered by Medicare because of an agreement with the Australian government. |
| How can I seek more information about insurance | Contact Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222. |