WHO CAN REGISTER AS A PRINCIPAL OR ASSOCIATE SUPERVISOR?

by Simon Moss

Introduction

At CDU, and indeed at most Australian universities, to supervise a PhD or Masters by Research candidate, you need to approval to supervisor. In particular, you need to be assigned to the supervisor register at CDU—as either as an associate supervisor or as a principal supervisor. The following table specifies the criteria you need to fulfil to achieve this goal.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Associate supervisor | Principal supervisor |
| You should be active in research | You must be active in research |
| You should have attained the degree by research at a level that is as high or higher than any candidate you supervise—or completed research activity that is comparable to this level | You must have attained the degree by research at a level that is as high or higher than any candidate you supervise—or, in exceptional circumstances, completed research activity that is comparable to this level |
| You must be a paid CDU staff member. Alternatively, you could be an Emeritus Professor, Adjunct, or Honorary Fellow if you can dedicate substantial time, such as a day a week or more, to your activities with CDU. | You must be a paid CDU staff member. Alternatively, you could be an Emeritus Professor, Adjunct, or Honorary Fellow if you can dedicate substantial time, such as a day a week or more, to your activities with CDU. |
|  | You should have published in high quality journals. In particular, you could have published two or more Q1 publications in the last five years—or propose a case that demonstrates equivalent quality |
|  | You must also have fulfilled additional criteria to demonstrate you continue to be   * familiar with HDR policies, procedures, and practices at CDU * familiar with managing challenging candidates * experienced with resolving some of the complications that research candidates might experience |

An associate supervisor can fulfil the roles and enjoy the benefits of a principal supervisor, besides a few exceptions. In particular

* only the principal supervisor is responsible for paperwork, such as progress reports—although all supervisors can contribute to this paperwork
* every research candidate must be assigned one principal supervisor
* usually, research candidates are assigned to the same college or institute as the principal supervisor

This document clarifies these principles, especially the criteria you need to fulfil to become a principal supervisor. If you do not fulfill the criteria to become a supervisor, you might instead act as an advisor. An advisor is similar to a supervisor but not as accountable to the university. Therefore, each candidate must be assigned at least two supervisors.

## Two pathways to become a principal supervisor

If you are CDU academic and

* are research active
* have attained a degree by research as high or higher than any candidate you supervisors
* have published two or more Q1 publications in the last five years or equivalent

you can complete one of two pathways to become a principal supervisor.

**Pathway 1: Completion of a research candidate from the start to completion**

If you have supervised a research candidate from the start to completion, you can utilize the following table to clarify the level of supervision for which you can apply

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Experience | Opportunities to develop this competence | Caveat |
| I have supervised a **Masters by Research** candidate from start to completion **at CDU** | Principal supervisor for Masters by Research candidates | None |
| I have supervised a **PhD** candidate from start to completion at **CDU** | Principal supervisor for PhD or Masters by Research candidates | None |
| I have supervised a **Masters by Research** candidate from start to completion but **not at CDU** | Principal supervisor for Masters by Research candidates, but with a caveat | You agree to read and study the following sections this [webpage](https://www.cdu.edu.au/research-and-innovation/higher-degree-research/useful-materials)   * Before enrolment * Monitoring progress and resolving problems * Supporting the wellbeing and confidence of candidates * Submission |
| I have supervised a **PhD** candidate from start to completion but **not at CDU** | Principal supervisor for PhD or Masters by Research candidates, but with a caveat | You agree to read and study the following sections on this [webpage](https://www.cdu.edu.au/research-and-innovation/higher-degree-research/useful-materials)   * Before enrolment * Monitoring progress and resolving problems * Supporting the wellbeing and confidence of candidates * Submission |

**Pathway 2: Expedited pathway**

If you have not supervised a research candidate from the start to completion, you may consider the second, expedited pathway. Specifically, to be registered as a principal supervisor of PhD or Masters by Research candidates, you need to achieve the three competencies that are detailed in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Competence | Opportunities to develop this competence | Evidence you have developed this competence |
| Familiarity with HDR policies, procedures, and practices at CDU  Familiarity with managing challenging candidates | Materials on the [webpage](https://www.cdu.edu.au/research-and-innovation/higher-degree-research/useful-materials) that relate to supervisors, especially in the sections   * Before enrolment * Monitoring progress and resolving problems * Supporting the wellbeing and confidence of candidates * Submission | You could   * email Simon Moss to organize a multiple choice test, or * demonstrate your knowledge of this material in some other format, such as writing a summary for your candidates |
| Experienced with resolving some of the complications that research candidates might experience | Attendance of discussions about HDR candidates, such as the supervisor workshops | Specify at least two dates at which you attended these workshops |

If you achieve these competences, you are eligible to register to become a principal supervisor of PhD or Masters by Research candidates, provided you agree to

* seek at least 8 hours of mentoring about your supervision during the next year
* agree to attend at least 4 hours of supervision workshops during the next two years

This expedited pathway, however, is usually available only to academics who have been supervising at **least 2 years** and preferably 3 or more years—and have supervised at least **2 research candidates at the AQF level they want to supervise**. If academics have not been supervising at least two years, they may not have experienced the range of challenges and complications to assume the role of principal.

**Complications: Continuity of supervision**

After an associate supervisor is upgraded and registered as a principal supervisor, one common problem could unfold. In particular,

* the associate supervisor might then become the principal supervisor of a particular candidate, and
* the academic who was previously the principal supervisor might become an associate supervisor

This change, although permissible, can generate some complications. For example

* the candidates will need to shift their relationship with each supervisor
* the candidate may be uncertain who to trust on particular matters
* to illustrate, if candidates need advice about their career, they might not feel they can approach the academic who was previously the principal supervisor

To prevent this uncertainty and disruption, if an associate supervisor plans to become a principal supervisor of a particular candidate later

* from the outset, the associate supervisor could be delegated some, if not most, of the roles that a principal supervisor assumes—such as completion of annual reports
* during this time, the principal supervisor would mentor and advise the associate supervisor on these roles

**Complications: Level of experience**

One of the most important determinants of effective supervision is humility. Supervisors who acknowledge their limitations, recognize their assumptions may be flawed, and embrace perspectives that differ from their own preconceptions tend to be the most successful. However, some inexperienced supervisors underestimate the benefits of experience—and perhaps overestimate their capacity to resolve challenging problems in HDR. Therefore, CDU recommends

* academics should not be the principal supervisor of more than 1 x N candidates—in which N is the number of years in which they have been a principal supervisor
* furthermore, no academics should be the principal supervisor of more than 5 candidates, besides exceptional circumstances.

# Other criteria

**Completion of** r**esearch activity** **that is comparable to this level**

In most circumstances, supervisors of Masters by Research candidates should have completed a Masters by Research. Supervisors of PhD candidates should have completed a PhD or equivalent. However, especially for associate supervisors, these individuals might instead have completed research activity that is comparable to these levels. The following table illustrates, only roughly, the research output that might be equivalent to a Masters by Research or PhD

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Masters by Research | PhD |
| * Scholarly book: single author | * Two scholarly books: single author |
| * 2 refereed journals as first author, with an impact factor of 1 or higher | * 4 refereed journals as first author, with an impact factor of 1 or higher |
| * 1 International exhibition or performance for creative arts | * 2 International exhibitions or performances for creative arts |
| * 2 national exhibitions or performances for creative arts | * 4 national exhibitions or performances for creative arts |

## Procedure

To register, you need to complete a specific form, accessible from

* <https://www.cdu.edu.au/research-and-innovation/current-students/hdr-supervisors-register>