

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) - Confirmation of Candidature Procedures

INTRODUCTION

The University Common Rules for the Degrees of Doctor of Philosophy, Masters by Research, and Research Professional Doctorate state that the candidature of commencing research degree candidates must be confirmed at the expiry of the specified confirmation period.

Failure of the candidate to meet the Confirmation of Candidature Procedures requirements within the specified timeframes will result in the candidate being asked to show cause as to why they should remain enrolled in the degree (see 'Non-compliance' below).

COMPLIANCE

This is a compliance requirement under the:

- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\)](#); and
- [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students](#)

INTENT

The intention of this document is to ensure all HDR candidates are aware of the requirements and timeframe to complete a [Supervision Agreement](#), [Research Proposal](#) and Oral Presentation within the period stated in the Common Course Rules for their HDR program and to outline the steps required for the confirmation of candidature for commencing HDR candidates.

RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

In the context of this document

Associate Supervisor means an individual who has demonstrated expertise in the candidate's research area and who provides advice in specialised aspects of the research program. This person may not necessarily be a University staff member;

DVC means the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor;

Faculty HDR Panel means a panel convened by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor for the purposes of confirmation of candidature, recommendation of scholarships and evaluation of examiners' reports for Higher Degrees by Research. The Panel has a minimum of three (3) academic members of staff and is constituted on a case by case basis, taking into consideration the reason for convening the panel, the criteria for membership and any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest;

HDR means Higher Degree by Research and includes PhD candidates, Masters by Research candidates and Research Professional Doctorate candidates;

Oral Defence Presentation means an oral examination by the Faculty HDR Panel. It provides the candidate with the opportunity to present and discuss the merit of the research proposal with the Faculty HDR Panel and to demonstrate the candidate's ability to complete the proposed research degree;

Principal Supervisor means an academic staff member of the University who holds a degree and/or experience deemed by the DVC as equivalent to the degree being undertaken by the candidate and who is primarily responsible for the rigorous supervision of the program of study of the candidate;

PVC means the relevant Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor;

PVC Delegate means the Faculty Associate Dean (or equivalent), who is the delegate of the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor for HDR matters; and

Show cause means that when a candidate is making unsatisfactory progress in their studies/research they are asked to advise the Research and Research Training Committee why their candidature should not be terminated. This usually occurs following failure to complete confirmation of candidature requirements and/or two consecutive semesters of unsatisfactory progress.

PROCEDURES

Confirmation Period

For Doctor of Philosophy degrees, the confirmation of candidature must be completed within eight (8) months of full-time study.

For Masters by Research and Research Professional Doctorate degrees, the confirmation of candidature must be completed within six (6) months of full-time study.

Components

The confirmation of candidature requires completion of the following components, which are outlined in detail in this procedure:

Stage 1: Formation of the Supervisory Panel and the Supervision Agreement;

Stage 2: Submission of the Research Proposal;

Stage 3: Oral Defence Presentation of the Research Proposal;

Stage 4: Faculty Assessment and Recommendation;

Stage 5: Formal Notification of Outcome.

Non-compliance

If a candidate fails to comply with the requirements and associated timeframes outlined in this procedure, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), on behalf of the Research and Research Training Committee (RRTC), shall write to the candidate asking him/her to show cause why he or she should not have their candidature terminated.

Upon receipt of the response, or expiry of the period for responding, the DVC, in consultation with the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, will determine to either extend the period for completion of the outstanding requirements, or to terminate candidature.

The candidate has the right to appeal the decision to terminate using the [Students - Academic Grievance Procedures](#) or the [Students - Administrative Complaints Procedures](#). Such an appeal should be lodged within one (1) month of the date of the letter of termination.

Stage 1: Formation of the Supervisory Panel and the Supervision Agreement

Purpose

The [Supervision Agreement](#) provides a mechanism to assist candidates and their supervisors to define the boundaries of their working relationship. This step includes formation of the Supervisory Panel and outlines the roles and expectations of the candidate, the Principal Supervisor and the Associate Supervisor/s.

Procedure

The [Supervision Agreement](#) must be completed within three (3) months of the candidate's commencement.

The commencing HDR candidate and their Principal Supervisor discuss their respective roles and responsibilities in accordance with the [HDR - Supervision and Mentoring Procedures](#). Together they identify and approach potential Associate Supervisors to participate in delivery of the candidate's HDR supervision and training. The primary responsibility for approaching potential Associate Supervisors lies with the Principal Supervisor.

Associate Supervisors must be on the approved University [Register of Supervisors](#) prior to approval as an Associate Supervisor. This can be determined via the Faculty Administration Office or via the Office of Research and Innovation. Associate Supervisors are added to the Supervisory Panel using the [HDR - Supervision and Mentoring Procedures](#), which requires completion and submission of the [HDR-11 Associate Supervisor Form for Research Degree Candidates](#). Persons who may be eligible to be an Associate Supervisor, but who are not on the University Register of Supervisors, may apply for registration using the HDR - Register of Supervisors Procedures.

Expectations of Principal Supervisor and candidate concerning how they will work together and the roles of the Associate Supervisors are documented as the Supervision Agreement, on the form [HDR -14 Supervision Agreement](#).

The HDR candidate and supervisors sign the Supervision Agreement and submit it to the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor within three (3) months of the candidate commencing his/her candidature.

The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor considers and approves the Supervision Agreement, as appropriate. Such consideration may include the expertise, tenure and other time commitments of the proposed members of the Supervisory Panel, as well as the overall capacity of the Faculty to ensure the satisfactory completion of the HDR training.

In the event that the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor does not approve the Supervision Agreement, the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor must provide their reason/s for non-approval and indicate what modifications are necessary for it to be approved.

The Faculty Office notifies the candidate, Principal Supervisor, PVC Delegate and Head of School of the outcome, updates internal records and forwards the paperwork to the Office of Research and Innovation for recording in the University's student system and inclusion on the student file.

Stage 2: Submission of the Research Proposal

Purpose

In keeping with the duty of care of the University to its students, the research proposal:

- Serves to identify students who may have difficulty in coping with a HDR program;
- Provides a method for the DVC to evaluate the feasibility and resource implications of a HDR student's research project; and
- Helps HDR students to structure and refine their ideas and to ensure that their chosen research project is feasible within the stated time and funding limits of the training program.

Content

The research proposal should include a full literature review of a length appropriate to the discipline and research topic and provide sufficient detail to allow for the evaluation of perceived contribution to the existing body of knowledge, planned methodology, feasibility and resource implications

The length of the research proposal will vary according to discipline, however, as a general guide, for most discipline areas and research topics the detailed research proposal will not exceed 7,000 to 10,000 words in length for a PhD and Research Professional Doctorate and 5,000 to 7,000 words in length for a Masters by Research. Further guidance on the Research Proposal may be sought from the relevant Faculty

Procedure

The research proposal must be submitted within:

- For PhD degrees - six (6) months after commencing candidature for full-time students and twelve (12) months for part-time students.
- For Masters degrees – four (4) months after commencing candidature for full-time students and eight (8) months for part-time students.
- For Research Professional Doctorate degrees – four (4) months full-time and eight (8) months for part-time students after commencing the research component of their course.

In close consultation with the Principal and Associate Supervisors, the HDR candidate drafts the detailed Research Proposal, using the notes on the form [HDR-13 Research Proposal Cover Sheet](#) as a guide.

When the candidate is satisfied with the research proposal, the candidate submits the Research Proposal Cover Sheet to their Principal Supervisor, along with the [HDR-13 Research Proposal Cover Sheet](#) signed by the candidate.

The Principal Supervisor completes the [HDR-35 Confirmation of Candidature – Supervisor Evaluation form](#) and provides a copy to the candidate, endorses the [HDR-13 Research Proposal Cover Sheet](#) and submits all three documents to the PVC Delegate, with a copy to the Head of School.

The PVC Delegate, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor and Head of School, will compose a Faculty HDR Panel to assess the perceived contribution to the existing body of knowledge, planned methodology, feasibility and resource implications of the proposal in order to ensure it is appropriate for the level of the degree and that the candidate has an adequate understanding of the topic.

If necessary, the Faculty HDR Panel may compose a maximum of one (1) member from the candidate's Supervisory Panel.

Composition of the Faculty HDR Confirmation of Candidature Panel

The Faculty HDR Panel will have at least three (3) members.

All members of the Faculty HDR Panel shall have experience in the discipline and have qualifications (or experience) at least equivalent to that of the degree program being assessed. Such members may be drawn from outside of the Faculty and/or University, as deemed appropriate.

Composition of the Faculty HDR Panel will take into account any potential conflicts of interest. Where a panel member has indicated a potential or actual conflict of interest, this will be documented and declared in advance of the Oral Defence Presentation to the PVC Delegate, the Principal Supervisor and candidate.

If necessary, the Faculty HDR Panel may comprise a maximum of one (1) supervisor of the candidate undergoing assessment.

The Candidate's Supervisor on the Faculty HDR Panel may not be the Chair of the Faculty HDR Panel.

The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor has the final authority regarding the composition of the Faculty HDR Panel.

The PVC Delegate advises the Principal Supervisor and candidate of the composition of the approved Faculty HDR Panel in writing at least two (2) weeks prior to the Oral Defence Presentation.

Stage 3: Oral Defence Presentation of the Research Proposal

Purpose

The Oral Defence Presentation of the research proposal usually takes place in the form of an open seminar within 2-4 weeks post submission of the research proposal. The Oral Defence Presentation provides the candidate with the opportunity to present and discuss the merit of the research proposal with the Faculty HDR Panel and to demonstrate the candidate's ability to complete the proposed research degree.

Procedure

The PVC Delegate, in consultation with the Faculty HDR Panel, candidate and Principal Supervisor, sets the date and venue for the Oral Defence Presentation of the proposal. The Oral Defence Presentation should take place within four (4) weeks of submission of the research proposal.

The PVC Delegate circulates the research proposal to members of the approved Faculty HDR Panel at least two (2) weeks prior to the Oral Defence Presentation.

The Faculty Administration advertises the Oral Defence Presentation.

The research proposal and Oral Defence Presentation are assessed by the Faculty HDR Panel and feedback on the content and appropriateness of the research proposal for the degree being undertaken is provided to the candidate and their Principal Supervisor.

The candidate may be asked by members of the Faculty HDR Panel to respond to questions during or at the conclusion of the presentation.

In making an assessment of the research proposal and the candidate's ability to successfully complete the degree for which they are enrolled, the Faculty HDR Panel shall take into account the following matters:

The candidate's:

- Ability to express ideas clearly and logically, both orally and in writing;
- Knowledge of the field and of current theories, as presented in both the research proposal and Oral Defence Presentation;
- Critical and original insights into the field;
- The capacity of the candidate for independent work;
- Ability to clearly present the aims and rationale for the project, project design and how the project as a whole contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field;
- Choice of suitable research method/s, including awareness of ethical issues;
- Understanding of the proposed method/s of data analyses and awareness of any particular strengths and weaknesses; and
- The overall contribution of the project to the existing body of knowledge in the field, at a level appropriate to the degree in which the candidate is enrolled.

Stage 4: Faculty Assessment and Recommendation

The Faculty HDR Panel shall convene privately within two (2) working days of the Oral Defence Presentation to complete their written assessment of the research proposal and Oral Defence Presentation.

The Faculty HDR Panel's written assessment will be completed on the [HDR-16: Proforma for Assessment of Oral Presentation](#) and endorsed by all members of the Panel.

The Faculty HDR Panel may recommend:

- Approval of the research proposal and confirmation of candidature; or
- Approval of the research proposal with minor modifications. The PVC Delegate must approve the changes; or
- Reassessment of the research proposal and/or its Oral Defence Presentation (this recommendation may be made on the candidate's first assessment only); or
- Rejection of the research proposal and its Oral Defence Presentation.

The Chair of the Faculty HDR Panel will submit the completed assessment to the PVC Delegate for endorsement within five (5) working days of the Oral Defence Presentation.

The PVC Delegate considers the Faculty HDR Panel's assessment and advises the Chair within two (2) working days that the assessment is endorsed. The PVC Delegate may request additional modifications to the proposal. Such requests must be justified and will normally be limited to adequacy of faculty support and impact of the project on faculty resources.

Within ten (10) working days of the Oral Defence Presentation, the Chair of the Faculty HDR Panel shall meet with the candidate and the Principal Supervisor to provide a copy of and discuss the written assessment and its recommendation. The meeting may take place via the most convenient method of communication.

Where the Faculty HDR Panel has recommended:

- **Approval** – the research proposal and PVC Delegate-endorsed Faculty HDR Panel assessment are sent to the Office of Research and Innovation with the recommendation that the Candidate's enrolment be confirmed by the DVC.
- **Approval with minor modifications** – the candidate must complete the necessary requirements within two (2) weeks of receiving the assessment.

The candidate provides the revised research proposal, along with a copy of the Faculty HDR Panel assessment to the Principal Supervisor for approval and re-submission.

The Principal Supervisor submits the revised research proposal with the Faculty HDR Panel assessment and a statement of support, to the PVC Delegate for endorsement. If the revised research proposal is deemed satisfactory by the PVC Delegate it is then sent to Office of Research and Innovation with the recommendation that the Candidate's enrolment be confirmed by the DVC.

- **Reassessment** of the research proposal and/or its Oral Defence Presentation – the candidate must complete the necessary requirements within six (6) weeks of receiving the assessment. Stages 2-4 of this procedure are repeated.

The research proposal and PVC Delegate-endorsed Faculty HDR Panel assessment are sent to the Office of Research and Innovation with advice as to the revised due date/s. Unless specifically requested by the Faculty HDR Panel, the DVC is not notified and there is no formal notification of outcome.

Resubmission may be sought on the first assessment only. Any reassessments may only result in a recommendation of Approval or Rejection.

- **Rejection** of the research proposal and its Oral Defence Presentation – the research proposal and PVC Delegate-endorsed Faculty HDR Panel assessment are sent to the Office of Research and Innovation with the recommendation that the candidate be asked by the DVC to 'show cause' as to why they should remain enrolled in the current degree.

Stage 5: Formal Notification of Outcome

Where the PVC Delegate has endorsed either a recommendation for confirmation of candidature or for show cause, the Office of Research and Innovation notifies the DVC of the outcome.

The DVC determines whether to accept the outcome and, via the Office of Research and Innovation, notifies the candidate, Principal Supervisor, PVC Delegate and Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor of the outcome in writing.

Show Cause

If a Candidate has failed to successfully complete the confirmation of candidature, they will be asked to show cause as to why they should remain enrolled in the program.

Upon receipt of the response, or expiry of the period for responding, the DVC, in consultation with the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, will determine to either extend the period for submission of a response, or to terminate Candidature.

The Candidate has the right to appeal the decision to terminate candidature. Students wishing to appeal should refer to the [Students - Academic Grievance Procedures](#) or the [Students - Administrative Complaints Procedures](#). Such an appeal should be lodged within one (1) month of the date of the letter of termination.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Internal

[Common Course Rules – Masters by Research](#)

[Common Course Rules – Doctor of Philosophy \(PhD\)](#)

[HDR - Supervision and Mentoring Procedures](#)

HDR – Register of Supervisors Procedures

[HDR-14 Research Degree Supervision Agreement](#)

[HDR-13 Research Proposal Cover Sheet](#)

[HDR-16 Confirmation of Candidature – HDR Panel Assessment Form](#)

[HDR-35 Confirmation of Candidature – Supervisor Evaluation Form](#)

[Students - Academic Grievance Procedures](#)

[Students - Administrative Complaints Procedures](#)

External

Document History and Version Control

Last amendment:	15 Dec 2017	Next Review:	May 2014
Sponsor:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Research Training		
Contact Officer:	Director, Research		

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description
1.00	20 May 2005	Academic Board	Creation of original document and upload to CDU website.
1.01	5 Oct 2006	Manager Governance	Editorial changes – Update template Maintain the AVCC web link Add to Appendix 3 No 2.4 “.....provision for an experienced supervisor to mentor an associate supervisor.....”
1.02	15 May 2007	Manager Office of Research and Innovation	Update web links
1.03	26 Nov 2007	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and International	Add to Attributes, last para, p.1 For Research Professional Doctorate students both the Research Proposal and the Supervision Agreement must be registered with the Office of Research and Innovation within 4 months (8 months for part-time students) of commencing the research component of their course.
1.04	1 Jul 2008	Acting Manager Governance	Update the confirmation of candidature process to include the new requirements as per the approved changes to Common Course Rules in June 2008 – CDU Council for oral presentation. Change order of Appendices.
1.05	12 Mar 2010	Governance	Change process into new process format. Change Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and International to reflect title change. Change Research Office to Office of Research and Innovation to reflect title change.
2.00	30 Jul 2010	Academic Board	Major Review
2.01	31 Dec 2010	Governance	Convert process document to new procedure template. Amend Executive dean to pro Vice-Chancellor to reflect title change. Amend Research Committee to Research and Research Training Committee to reflect title change.
3.00	25 May 2012	Academic Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Review of document including: • Change of timeframes for completion of various stages. • Change to required length of Research Proposal. • Change to procedure for submission and assessment of Research Proposal and Oral Defence Presentation.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change to forms
3.01	13 Aug 2013	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated hyperlinks • Converted document to current template • Assigned document number
3.02	10 Aug 2017	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion to new Governance template due to new University branding • Updated hyperlinks