

# HDR - Supervision and Mentoring Procedures

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## INTRODUCTION

Charles Darwin University recognises the importance of appropriate support and training for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Candidates (henceforth known as the candidate). This document outlines the framework provided by CDU to facilitate the mentoring of HDR candidates by experienced researchers. This document also provides procedures for the supervision of Higher Degree by Research candidates at the University.

## 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

To provide guidance upon supervision and mentoring structures and responsibilities that will ensure a positive relationship between the supervisor and candidate and compliance with the University Common Course Rules for the various HDR awards.

## 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 Deputy Vice-Chancellor;

**Examiner** means a person who is approved by the Research and Research Training Committee to examine the candidate's thesis. Such persons would normally be external to the University. An examiner who lives in a country other than Australia is considered to be an international examiner;

**HDR.** means Higher Degree by Research - (includes Doctor of Philosophy, Masters by Research, and the research component of a Professional Doctorate);

**Principal Supervisor** means a member of the University academic staff appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), upon the recommendation of the relevant Head of School. The Principal Supervisor is responsible for guiding a Candidate in the design and implementation of research, and for monitoring and reporting on the Candidate's progress to the DVC;

**Supervision Agreement** means the written and jointly signed agreement of expectations between the Candidate and the Supervisory Panel; and

**Supervisory Panel** means a group of individuals approved by the Research and Research Training Committee to provide academic and administrative support to the Candidate that ensures timely submission of a high quality Thesis. The Supervisory Panel must consist of at least a Principal Supervisor and two Associate Supervisors.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **The Higher Degree by Research Course**

A candidate for a Higher Degree by Research is a researcher in training. Collectively, HDR candidates make a significant contribution to the research output of the University and in return receive a high level of training to develop their research capacity. An HDR candidate shall make a distinct contribution to knowledge by developing new theories, research methods, or by defining new information. The contribution shall amount to more than a description of events or area and shall display originality of thought at the PhD level. It is the level of originality and contribution to the field that distinguishes the Doctoral and Master courses from other postgraduate qualifications.

The thesis submitted as a requirement for a Higher Degree by Research must contain an examination of timely and significant research topics to a level achievable within the designated time-frame, and must demonstrate that the candidate understands his or her field of research. It must contain a critical appraisal of existing literature on the subject, provide explicit descriptions of theoretical frameworks, research designs, and analyses of information employed and, in the case of PhD candidates, provide evidence of originality.

The thesis should be written in formally crafted English to a high standard.

### **Supervision Structures**

A comprehensive structure exists for ensuring continuity of quality supervision throughout periods of candidature and provides a mechanism for the acquisition of supervisory skills by those members of academic staff who have had minimal previous experience in the supervision of HDR candidates.

The University recommends that all candidates have a Supervisory Panel that can provide academic and administrative support to the candidate to ensure timely submission of a high quality thesis. The Supervisory Panel must consist of at least a Principal Supervisor and two Associate Supervisors. All Supervisors of CDU HDR candidates are required to be included in the CDU Register of HDR Supervisors. The relevant process for registration is HDR – Register of Supervisor Procedures.

### **Definitions and roles of participants in the supervision process**

#### **Principal Supervisor**

The Principal Supervisor is normally a member of the University academic staff appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), upon the recommendation of the relevant Head of School. The Principal Supervisor is responsible for guiding a candidate in the design and implementation of research, and for monitoring and reporting on the candidate's progress to the DVC.

The Principal Supervisor should hold a degree equivalent to that level at which he or she will be supervising or alternatively, have produced a body of research publications that demonstrate sustained debate at the appropriate level, or have a record of successful supervision at the required level. The Supervisor will have demonstrated skills in research or supervision at a scale of sustained analysis typical of research degree

theses. The DVC may wish to examine the curriculum vitae of the prospective Principal Supervisor to evaluate his or her suitability to supervise particular candidates.

In appointing the Principal Supervisor, the DVC will take note of the number and progress of other candidates under the same Supervisor, and the plans of the prospective Supervisor with respect to leave, teaching, or administrative commitments. Principal Supervisors will only be appointed if their tenure is greater than the proposed length of candidature.

Where the tenure of the prospective Principal Supervisor may cease before the expected completion of candidature, arrangements must be made in consultation with the candidate to ensure continuity of supervision.

An academic who has not had extensive supervisory experience would normally be appointed to a position of Associate Supervisor, rather than Principal Supervisor.

Part-time employees of the University may be appointed as Principal Supervisors if they can satisfy the conditions as detailed in these procedures.

In exceptional circumstances, External Principal Supervisors may be appointed where the University does not have the disciplinary expertise. See External Supervision Agreement.

## Contact

The Principal Supervisor is expected to maintain fortnightly contact as a minimum with the candidate and carry out both academic supervision and the administration associated with candidature. The agreed frequency and method of contact should be documented in the Supervision Agreement, Associate Supervisors have minimal administrative responsibility and meet with the candidate at their mutual convenience.

Where the Principal Supervisor is likely to be unavailable for more than two months, or an unforeseen absence of the Principal Supervisor exceeds two months, another Principal Supervisor will be appointed for the period of the absence or until the unavailable Principal Supervisor is able to resume duties. The relevant Head of School is responsible for advising the DVC of such absences and for recommending the appointment of a replacement Principal Supervisor as soon as practicable.

A Principal Supervisor or Associate Supervisor may not act as examiner of a thesis submitted for examination by a candidate that he or she has supervised.

## Intellectual Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor

There are a number of key activities, deemed to be part of good supervisory practice, that are expected of all Principal Supervisors. Although Faculties and disciplines will express these intellectual responsibilities in subtly different ways, basic characteristics of these responsibilities can be identified and are outlined below. In some aspects, the Principal Supervisor may need to enlist the assistance of the Associate Supervisors to provide appropriate academic support.

- The Principal Supervisor should provide intellectual guidance to a candidate during the formulation of research designs. When developing research plans and timetables, consideration should be given to choosing appropriate topics and time-scales; incorporation of "safety nets", e.g. primary and secondary objectives; and creating staged designs of research.
- The Principal Supervisor should provide guidance to a candidate in the candidate's exploration of the discipline by suggesting contact with other relevant researchers, supplying reading lists and advising on choices of instruments, libraries, computer programs, etc.

- The Principal Supervisor should be available on a regular basis to provide academic guidance to a candidate. The Principal Supervisor should critically evaluate the work of the candidate and provide detailed comments of this evaluation to the candidate. The Principal Supervisor should be prompt in providing comments on drafts.
- The Principal Supervisor should ensure that a candidate is aware of issues relating to research involving humans or animals and the requirements of the relevant Ethics Committees.
- While issues of intellectual property are dealt with by the Executive Director, Corporate Services, the Principal Supervisor should ensure that a candidate is aware of intellectual property issues which may arise and their rights and obligations pertaining thereto.
- The Principal Supervisor shall encourage good research practices by assisting and encouraging the candidate to develop self-confidence and resilience, problem-solving skills and skills in the processes of self-evaluation. The Principal Supervisor should also assist in enhancing the candidate's understanding of research itself (epistemology etc), and encourage the candidate to present results of his or her research at conferences and seminars.

### Administrative Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor

The various roles of the Principal Supervisor are not divisible. In addition to providing guidance in intellectual matters, the Principal Supervisor is responsible for a number of administrative procedures associated with candidature. The Principal Supervisor must be familiar with the University Common Course Rules for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Common Rules for Professional Doctorates and the Common Rules for the Degree of Master by Research and must follow all required administrative procedures associated with candidature, as outlined on the University website.

In consultation with the University Research Degrees and Scholarships Officer from the Office of Research and Innovation and the relevant Head of School, the Principal Supervisor should:

- Ensure that a candidate is aware of University rules, policies and procedures relating to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Professional Doctorate or Master by Research;
- Provide information with regard to the requirements of the Animal Ethics Committee and the Human Research Ethics Committee and ensure that necessary applications for clearance are obtained prior to the commencement of research;
- Establish a schedule of regular meetings between themselves and the candidate;
- Monitor the status of the Candidate's progress and provide regular progress reports, as outlined in the [HDR - Annual and Interim Reports Procedures](#), to the DVC
- Advise the Faculty of the ongoing future resource needs of the candidate, including access to funds, rooms, vehicles etc;
- Recommend appropriate grant-giving bodies who may award the candidate a grant to further their research and provide guidance in the completion of grant applications, including the supply of referees' reports; and
- Provide advice on the selection of theses examiners.

### Responsibilities of the Candidate

Quality supervision arises from the positive interaction between Principal Supervisor and candidate. Within this interaction it is possible to isolate a number of activities which are the responsibility of the candidate. They include:

- Immediately after the commencement of candidature (in the case of Professional Doctorates, the commencement of the research component of the degree), to discuss with the Principal Supervisor the extent and type of guidance and feedback the candidate would find most helpful;

- The provision of Interim and Annual Reports, as outlined in the [HDR - Annual and Interim Reports Procedures](#), detailing comments on research progress and on any difficulties encountered, to the DVC;
- A responsibility to inform the Principal Supervisor of critical problems that significantly impede the candidate's progress as they arise;
- The presentation of drafted thesis chapters to the Principal Supervisor prior to the formal submission of the thesis. When providing such written material, a candidate must allow sufficient time prior to the thesis submission deadline, for the Principal Supervisor to consider, comment on and discuss the work with the candidate.

### Responsibilities of the relevant Faculty

The Faculty is responsible for ensuring that adequate Faculty-level resources are available to the Principal Supervisor and candidate, including :

- Administrative, spatial and financial resources for the research projects the faculty recommends to the DVC;
- Recognising supervision of HDR candidates as a teaching load borne by staff within the faculty;
- Encouraging a research culture within the faculty in which individual and group research is supported and valued;
- Facilitating and actively encouraging the development of supervisory skills; and
- Considering and making recommendations with regard to the appointment of Principal Supervisors and Associate Supervisors.

### Associate Supervisor

While the final responsibility for the supervision of a candidate rests with the Principal Supervisor, supervision will also involve at least two Associate Supervisors. Associate Supervisors may be appointed to the Register of Supervisors by the Research and Research Training Committee upon the recommendation of the Faculty. An Associate Supervisor is an individual who has demonstrated expertise in the candidate's research area and who provides advice in specialised aspects of the research program. Associate Supervisors may, but need not, be staff members of the University; they are often, but not always, Honorary Fellows of the University.

An individual may be appointed as an Associate Supervisor by the DVC on the recommendation of a candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, and of the relevant Head of School (subject to the proposed supervisor being successful in inclusion on the Register of Supervisors).

### Supervision Agreement

The University requires each research degree candidate and their Principal Supervisor to discuss a range of matters relating to the supervision partnership with a view to enhancing the quality of that partnership and facilitating the candidate's academic progress. This discussion, which may require more than one session, must take place within the first four months of candidature, and covers respective roles and responsibilities in accordance with these procedures. As part of the [HDR - Confirmation of Candidature Procedures](#), all commencing HDR candidates and their Principal Supervisors are required to submit a Supervision Agreement.

Expectations of the Principal Supervisor and candidate concerning how they will work together are documented as the Supervision Agreement on the form [HDR-14 Supervision Agreement](#), which includes suggested topics for discussion.

Supervision Agreements are unique to each candidate-Principal Supervisor partnership. They are intended to be a mechanism to assist candidates and their Principal Supervisors to define the boundaries of their supervisory relationship, but are not legally binding. Agreements, therefore, may need to be reviewed as the candidate-Principal Supervisor partnership develops. The Research and Research Training Committee recommends that such a review is carried out as part of the [HDR - Annual and Interim Reports Procedures](#).

### Formation of Supervisory Panel

The Supervisor and Candidate agree on composition of the Supervisory Panel according to the relevant Common Course Rules for their course and these procedures.

Associate Supervisors are added to the Supervisory Panel through the [HDR – Change of Supervisor Procedures](#).

All supervisors of CDU post-graduate research students need to be on the CDU Register of Supervisors, according to the *HDR – Register of Supervisor Procedures*.

The Panel must be in place within 4 months of commencing candidature for full-time students and 8 months for part-time students. (For Research Professional Doctorate students within 4 months full-time and 8 months for part-time students of commencing the research component of their course.)

### Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities

#### Mentoring Assistance – Pro Vice-Chancellor

To assist with ongoing mentoring of HDR candidates, the Pro Vice-Chancellor undertakes to:

- Be aware of the research of candidates within their Faculty and assist with mentoring of candidates, at least by ensuring that mentors are identified;
- Assist with flow of information to candidates (via the Principal Supervisor) within Faculty about new initiatives, processes and opportunities; and
- Allocate the proper resourcing to candidates from Faculty and School funds.

#### Ongoing Mentoring – Principal Supervisor

The Principal Supervisor provides ongoing mentoring for the HDR candidate, including:

- Advising the candidate of the ethical implications of all research and encouraging the Candidate to be aware of issues associated with good conduct in research and data retention;
- Providing ongoing guidance and ensuring the candidate is aware of current developments in their field of research. Provide guidance on research planning and setting of project milestones;
- Contributing to a learning environment which includes encouraging discussion and debate within the University and amongst peers;
- Completing the Supervision Agreement within the first four months and review it annually. Inform the candidate of resources available to assist in their research and how they may be obtained;
- Encouraging the candidate's participation in activities that will enhance their understanding of research project management;
- Providing critical evaluation of written and oral work and encouraging peer assessment from other researchers in their field;
- Encouraging candidates to become active in their field, promoting awareness of their research amongst national and international peers and assisting them to develop their research reputation;
- Encouraging collaboration with other researchers;

- Ensuring the candidate is aware of intellectual property policy and procedures associated with the research and that acknowledgement is given to all persons who contribute to the research effort;
- Discussing with the candidate, the selection of examiners and providing advice and feedback;
- Assisting the candidate to develop capacity for self-evaluation in the context of current expertise in field of research; and
- Providing advice on career path development.

### **Input and Feedback – Candidate**

The HDR candidate should provide input and feedback to their Principal Supervisor regarding the mentoring relationship, including the following:

- Seeking advice regarding the ethical implications of all research;
- Completing the Supervision Agreement within the first four months of supervision and review annually;
- Seeking advice regarding current developments in the field of research and on research planning;
- Seeking advice on relevant project resources available and with assistance from the Principal Supervisor applying for financial support through sponsorship and grants;
- Providing work promptly for assessment according to the previously agreed plan;
- Discussing the selection of Examiners, including any preferences and conflicts of interest;
- Declaring any potential for, or actual, conflict of interest in relation to supervision arrangements to the relevant Head of School; and
- Seeking advice on career path development in relevant discipline.

## **ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Internal**

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

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

[HDR - Annual and Interim Reports Procedures](#)

[HDR – Candidate Recruitment, Admission and Enrolment Procedures](#)

[HDR – Change of Supervisor Procedures](#)

[HDR10 – CDU Register of Supervisors](#)

[HDR-14 Supervision Agreement](#)

### **External**

## Document History and Version Control

<b>Last amendment:</b>	15 Dec 2017	<b>Next Review:</b>	Jul 2013
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Research Training		
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Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description
1.00	30.Jul 2010	Academic Board	Creation of original document and upload to CDU website. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change document to new format and post to web.</li> <li>• Combine 3.2.12 HDR Mentoring Process and HDR Supervision Guidelines into single document.</li> <li>• Minor changes to spelling and grammar.</li> <li>• Addition of relevant definitions.</li> </ul>
1.01	29 Aug 2011	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert guideline document to new procedure template.</li> <li>• Amend Research Committee to Research and Research Training Committee to reflect title change.</li> <li>• Amend Executive Dean to Pro Vice-Chancellor to reflect title change.</li> </ul>
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1.04	21 Oct 2020	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated hyperlinks and Internal Supporting Information</li> </ul>