

HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH: POLICY AND PROCEDURES (THE GOLD BOOK)

PART 5 ADMISSION TO HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH	2
5.1 Overview and introduction to Part 5	2
5.2 Principles relating to admission	3
5.3 Admission requirements	4
5.3.1 Summary of requirements	4
5.4 The application	5
5.4.1 Advice for prospective applicants and academic staff advising them	5
5.4.2 Application documents	6
Academic referees.....	7
Preliminary research proposal.....	7
5.4.3 Submission of the application	8
Dates and deadlines.....	8
5.4.4 Special categories of applicants	8
UC staff.....	8
Research candidates transferring from other institutions.....	9
International students who obtain permanent residency.....	10
Offshore applicants intending to study in their own country.....	10
5.5 The admission process	12
5.5.1 Summary of the admission process	12
Applicants for Research Training Scheme (RTS) places.....	12
International fee-paying applicants.....	13
Domestic fee-paying applicants.....	13
5.5.2 Admission procedures	13
Initial review of applications at University level.....	13
Scoring of domestic applications by ORRD.....	14
Academic assessment by the Division: supervision, research proposal, resources etc.....	15
DRDC decision on admissibility or admission.....	17
RTS ranking and selection.....	19
Divisional endorsement.....	21
Offers and acceptances.....	21
Commencement.....	21
5.6 Award of postgraduate research scholarships	22
5.6.1 General information	22
5.6.2 Applications	23
5.6.3 Scholarship selection procedures	23

PART 5 ADMISSION TO HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH

Note to users:

Part 5 of the revised Higher degrees by research: policy and procedures (the Gold Book) was approved by Academic Board on 14 October 2002, amended in February 2003, and fully updated in March 2007. This edition supersedes the Gold Book published in January 1999.

In accordance with Board resolution, this policy came into effect on 1 January 2003 for students commencing studies in a course after 1 January 2003. It applies to students enrolled in their course before this date unless otherwise indicated or required by University legislation or policy. For advice on the applicability of any aspect of this policy, please contact the secretary of the University Research Degrees Committee.

Forms and administrative guidelines are made available as appendices to the Gold Book. For advice on administrative matters relating to research candidature, please contact Imelda Anderson in the Office of Research and Research Degrees. Email Imelda.Anderson@canberra.edu.au Phone 02 6201 2142.

Inquiries relating to this policy should be addressed to Gay Landau, secretary of the University Research Degrees Committee. Email gay.landau@canberra.edu.au Phone 02 6201 5228.

5.1 Overview and introduction to Part 5

- 5.1.1 This Part of the policy deals with policy and procedures relating to admission from the application to offer of place.
- 5.1.2 Essentially, the admission process involves determination of an applicant's admissibility by the University and the relevant academic Division, then allocation of a research training place if one is available. Consideration for a scholarship, if required, is part of the process.
- 5.1.3 Section 5.2 sets out the **Principles** governing admission of applicants to postgraduate research programs at the University of Canberra.
- 5.1.4 Section 5.3 provides general information on **admission requirements**. Entry requirements for each type of research degree program (PhD, professional doctorate by research and masters by research) are set out in the relevant section of Part 3. Any additional requirements that apply to an individual program are specified in the University Handbook.
- 5.1.5 Section 5.4 sets out requirements for the **application** including supporting documentation and submission procedures. This section also covers special categories of applicants including University staff members, applicants who have prior research candidature and/or are transferring from other institutions, and

applicants intending to remain offshore while enrolled in a University research program.

- 5.1.6** The **admission process**, up to and including the offer of place and acceptance, is summarised then set out in detail in section **5.5**. Procedures vary according to the type of place the applicant is seeking. (Domestic students usually apply for a Commonwealth-funded place under the Research Training Scheme (RTS), plus a scholarship if appropriate.)
- 5.1.7** Finally, section **5.6** provides general information on the award of **postgraduate research scholarships**.

5.2 Principles relating to admission

- 5.2.1** The University of Canberra offers research training places in designated University Research Areas. (Research areas are formally designated by the University Research Committee and include University Research Centres, Research Areas of High Potential and other Research Areas. For information on UC research areas, see <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/atuc>) In exceptional circumstances, a research student may be admitted to work with researchers outside a designated University research area. Where this is the case, the University will ensure that supervisory expertise, resources and research activity in the academic area are sufficient to provide a high quality research training experience.
- 5.2.2** Places in higher degree research programs are allocated to applicants who meet UC admission requirements and have a perceived high probability of success with their studies within the duration of the course and funding time limits.

Committee responsibility

- 5.2.3** Within guidelines developed by the University Research Degrees Committee and the University Research Committee and approved by Academic Board, responsibility for admitting applicants to research programs rests with the academic Division, specifically the Divisional Research Degrees Committee (DRDC). University-wide processes are used to allocate Research Training Scheme places and to award scholarships.

Admission requirements

- 5.2.4** Admission requirements for higher degrees by research at UC are generally consistent with the Higher Education Qualification Guidelines of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Admissibility

- 5.2.5** An application for a higher degree research program will be accepted only if

supervision and adequate resources are available to support the proposed research. The research area must be able to demonstrate the capacity to provide each student with a quality research education experience. Evidence of this capacity is provided at an individual level through the candidate's learning plan and at a broad level through the formal status of and annual reporting by the research area, in particular, through existence of both a core of experienced researchers and a number of registered supervisors. Both are requirements for creation and retention of research area status.

Facilities and funding

5.2.6 The University provides facilities and funding to support research candidates. Minimum facilities provided to UC research candidate are set out in the statement *Minimum facilities for postgraduate research students* <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/policies/minimum-facilities> Each academic Division publishes its own guidelines on matters such as expenditure limits, conditions, and application procedures for funding.

5.2.7 The academic Division provides funding to research areas to support higher degree research students. Funds for research training within each area are based on a combination of higher degree research student load and research area performance.

Allocation of Research Training Scheme (RTS) places

5.2.8 Research Training Scheme (RTS) places are allocated to applicants through a competitive selection process based on academic merit and research potential. (RTS places are restricted to domestic applicants.)

5.3 Admission requirements

5.3.1 Summary of requirements

5.3.1.1 Applicants for admission to higher degree research programs must meet:

- (a) the requirements of the Admission Statute and Rules¹ and guidelines determined by Academic Board; *and*
- (b) admission requirements for the type of research program set out in Part 3 of this policy (PhD admission requirements section 3.2.4, Professional Doctorate by research 3.3.4 and Masters by research 3.4.4); *and*
- (c) entry requirements for the particular program specified in the course accreditation document and Determination of Course Particulars and published in the *University Handbook*.²

¹ UC Statutes and Rules at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/secretariat/legislation/>

² *University of Canberra Handbook* at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/handbook/>

5.3.1.2 The Divisional Research Degrees Committee (DRDC) may specify additional conditions of admission for an individual applicant (such as bridging requirements or supporting studies) consistent with this policy.

5.3.1.3 International applicants are required to satisfy English language requirements determined from time to time by Academic Board. Advice on current requirements is available from UC International at international@canberra.edu.au

5.3.1.4 International applicants must have appropriate academic qualifications. Qualifications from approved university institutions are regarded by the University as equivalent to Australian qualifications in accordance with assessments of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).

5.4 The application

5.4.1 Advice for prospective applicants and academic staff advising them

5.4.1.1 Before completing an application, applicants are advised to visit the University Research web page at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/atuc> and contact designated staff in the University Research Centre or research area to discuss their proposed research.

5.4.1.2 Academic staff contacted by prospective applicants are asked / advised to:

- (a) check the student's basic admissibility for the program he or she is contemplating, eg degree in a suitable field, sufficient research preparation for the PhD program (international inquirers should be advised that their qualifications will be assessed by UC International when the application is submitted before any determination can be made on academic equivalences);
- (b) explain the competitive admission process for Research Training Scheme places (ie tuition-free places funded by the Commonwealth Government for domestic students only – see further information below) and scholarships, in particular emphasising the importance of providing a *complete* application with *all* supporting documents for assessment (eg two referee reports for scoring – see Admission procedures below);
- (c) encourage suitable students to apply but not promise a place or a scholarship;
- (d) inquire about previous incomplete research candidature (within the last three years) that may reduce a domestic student's entitlement under the Research Training Scheme, to check the applicant has a reasonable prospect of completing on time;
- (e) note, and advise students where applicable, that coursework components of

research degrees must be undertaken *on campus* unless the unit or units are offered online;

- (f) note that while applicants with insufficient research preparation may be asked to undertake an additional unit or units as a condition of admission, these studies must fit within the maximum duration of candidature so must be strictly limited, and should be imposed only when necessary (see Part 3 of this policy on supporting studies in the PhD program);
- (g) where the applicant's research skills do not seem adequate, advise the student to apply for a suitable research masters program with a coursework component rather than the PhD program;
- (h) encourage late applicants to apply in the next admission round if possible, rather than start late and lose part of their period of entitlement; and
- (i) refer applicants to further sources of information such as the online UC Handbook, Courses and units database,³ relevant research area website, Admissions Officer in Student and Academic Services (email Postgrad.research@canberra.edu.au) or UC International (email international@canberra.edu.au).

5.4.2 Application documents

5.4.2.1 The application form for domestic or international students⁴ should be submitted with supporting documentation that will include:

- (a) a preliminary research proposal with a description of the proposed area of research (see below);
- (b) curriculum vitae demonstrating research experience, list of publications etc;
- (c) copies of academic qualifications and a complete academic record certified by the institution or other appropriate authority;
- (d) proof of citizenship, permanent residency etc (not required for international applicants);
- (e) for international applicants, evidence of English language proficiency where required;
- (f) names of potential supervisors, if known;
- (g) details of academic referees who will forward their reports directly to the University (see below);
- (h) details of prior periods of study towards an incomplete research degree if

³ UC Courses and units, Postgraduate degrees by research at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/courses/index.cfm?action=browse&type=course&coursegroup=03>

⁴ Application for admission to a higher degree by research course for domestic applicants (with or without Scholarship) at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/student-services/forms2> ; International student application form for postgraduate courses at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/int-future-students/attachments/pdf/INTPGformFA.pdf>

applicable; and

- (i) other information requested by the University, Division, School or program.

Academic referees

5.4.2.2 Applicants are required to nominate two academic referees who should be *academic* (if possible) or professional staff in the field in which the applicant intends to undertake research, familiar with the applicant's recent study or work, who have sighted the research proposal and can comment on the applicant's ability to undertake research. The applicant should send the report form to each referee to complete in confidence and forward directly to the University. Referees are asked to comment on the applicant's research proposal, academic and research capacity (including past academic record), research potential and possible scholarship ranking. (Referee report forms are provided with the domestic students' application form. International students may download the form from <http://www.canberra.edu.au/student-services/forms2>)

5.4.2.3 A prospective supervisor nominated by the applicant should not act as academic referees unless that person is familiar with the applicant's past work.

Preliminary research proposal

5.4.2.4 A preliminary research proposal is part of an application for admission. Information on the research must be sufficient to enable Divisional staff and the Divisional Research Degrees Committee to assess the nature of the topic proposed, confirm the project is within the University's research capacity, and determine the availability of appropriate supervision and resources. (For full advice on preliminary and final research proposals see *Writing the research proposal* at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/policies/research-proposal>)

5.4.2.5 The preliminary research proposal will normally be 2-5 pages in length and should:

- (a) describe –
 - (i) the proposed area of research (including context), justification for and aims of the research, and methodology (including a tentative thesis title if possible), and
 - (ii) as far as practicable – the general nature of the research to be pursued, including expected resources and conditions required to complete the research (eg field trips, specialised computer software, funding expectations);
- (b) demonstrate the competence of the applicant to undertake research at masters or doctoral level in the field to which the proposal relates by reference to either or both of the following –
 - (i) the educational and any professional achievements of the applicant,

(ii) substantial publications by the applicant in recognised, refereed journals, texts, conference papers.

5.4.2.6 The preliminary research proposal will be assessed by the head of the Research Centre or area or course convener and provided to the DRDC with the application.

5.4.2.7 After commencing the research program, candidates are required to develop a final research proposal within a set time. Requirements for the final proposal are in Part 6 of this document and *Writing the research proposal*.

5.4.3 Submission of the application

5.4.3.1 Applications should be lodged with Student and Academic Services (SAS) if the applicant is an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident or New Zealand citizen and with UC International if the applicant is to be enrolled as a full fee-paying overseas student.

Dates and deadlines

5.4.3.2 Domestic applications should be submitted by 31 May or 31 October for commencement the following semester. Research Training Scheme places are allocated each semester (provided places are available) for commencement the following semester. Most scholarships (apart from those tied to a research project and/or an external funding partner) are awarded at the end of the year for commencement in semester 1 the following year. International applications are accepted throughout the year but applications must be received by 30 September to be eligible for consideration for a scholarship for the following year. As dates may change, intending applicants should check this information with the HDR Admissions and Enrolments Officer (email postgrad.research@canberra.edu.au), UC International (email international@canberra.edu.au) or the Research Students website at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/students/admission>

5.4.4 Special categories of applicants

UC staff

5.4.4.1 Members of academic staff of the University of Canberra are encouraged to undertake higher degrees by research at institutions other than UC. It is beneficial to experience a different research culture and, in addition, there is potential for difficulties to arise when supervisor and candidate are colleagues in the same academic area. Staff members considering applying to UC should consult their Head of School in the first instance. If the staff member decides to proceed, the application must be endorsed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Division) and should include a statement explaining why, having considered alternatives, the applicant seeks to undertake the degree within the University.

5.4.4.2 At least one of the appointed supervisors for a member of staff admitted to a

higher degree research program must be external to the University.

5.4.4.3 Where a member of staff is admitted as a candidate, particular care should be taken to manage interpersonal sensitivities and potential conflicts of interest. The Head of School should monitor the candidate's progress. For further advice on staff candidature see Part 4 (section 4.8.2).

Research candidates transferring from other institutions

5.4.4.4 This section deals with admission of candidates with partly completed higher degrees by research from other institutions seeking to transfer candidature to UC, where the applicant would continue or modify the research project commenced at the previous institution.

5.4.4.5 As far as appropriate, applications for transfer to UC are subject to the same admission requirements and procedures as other applications. Applicants must complete the University's higher degree research admission form. Additional criteria may apply, and applicants may be asked for further information as outlined below to enable the DRDC to assess the application.

5.4.4.6 Applicants seeking to transfer from other institutions generally fall into two groups:

- (a) students transferring early in the research program (eg after one year of study), to maintain continuity of supervision where the supervisor has taken employment at UC, or for other reasons; and
- (b) students transferring later in the program, usually to maintain continuity of supervision where the supervisor has taken employment at UC.

5.4.4.7 An applicant seeking transfer to the University early in the research program (during or at the end of the first full-time equivalent year) is normally required to:

- (a) meet UC admission requirements for the degree (acknowledging the time already spent on the research project);
- (b) provide evidence of satisfactory progress at the other institution (through referees' reports and/or copies of progress reports);
- (c) submit a full research proposal with the application; and
- (d) comply with conditions in 5.4.4.11 if seeking an RTS place.

5.4.4.8 An applicant seeking transfer to the University during the second full-time equivalent year of candidature or later should submit with the application:

- (a) an abstract of the research undertaken to date including an indication of progress against the research plan;
- (b) an outline of expected resources and conditions required to complete the research (eg field trips, specialised computer software etc);

- (c) evidence of satisfactory progress at the other institution (through referees' reports and/or copies of progress reports);
- (d) information specified in 5.4.4.11 if seeking an RTS place;
- (e) an estimated submission date for the thesis; and
- (f) any other information the applicant considers relevant.

5.4.4.9 The DRDC will take this information into account in its assessment.

5.4.4.10 Once admitted, candidates who have transferred to UC are subject to University policy and procedures for progress, examination and completion of the degree. This would normally include use of a personal learning plan.

5.4.4.11 The following conditions apply to transferring candidates seeking RTS places:

- (a) An applicant holding an RTS place at the previous institution may be accepted as an RTS student if a place is available.
- (b) Where timing allows, an application for transfer requiring a Research Training Scheme place should be considered in an RTS admission round and go through the same ranking and selection process as other applications. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) may approve allocation of an RTS place at any time.
- (c) DEST Guidelines for the RTS require the University to take into account a transferring applicant's consumption of RTS entitlement at the previous institution to determine the remaining entitlement. The University admission form provides authority for this information to be obtained.
- (d) A pre-2001 HECS-exempt or HECS-liable student transferring from another institution may be admitted to an RTS place, subject to DEST requirements and the availability of a place.
- (e) An applicant for transfer holding an RTS place at the previous institution may apply for a UC postgraduate research scholarship.

International students who obtain permanent residency

5.4.4.12 International students who become permanent residents may apply and be considered for admission as a domestic student. Students *must* complete the domestic students' application form. Referee reports do not need to be resubmitted, but annual progress reports should be provided to show satisfactory academic progress in the research program. Further information is in the *International student fees policy* at <https://guard.canberra.edu.au/cocoon/policydb/displayDocument?DocumentId=238>

Offshore applicants intending to study in their own country

5.4.4.13 This section sets out special requirements for offshore applicants who intend to

remain in their own country for most or all of the duration of the research program. It does not apply to international students intending to enrol in a University program on-campus in Australia, who follow standard procedures described in section 5.5.

5.4.4.14 Except where indicated here, offshore applicants are subject to normal University admission requirements and procedures.

5.4.4.15 Applicants to whom these guidelines will apply include:

- (a) individual full fee-paying international students seeking exception to normal attendance requirements of one semester's full-time attendance or equivalent (see 6.3.1); and
- (b) individual students or a cohort of students in a higher degree research program covered by a Memorandum of Understanding or contract for an offshore arrangement.⁵

5.4.4.16 Factors to be taken into account in DRDC assessment of offshore applications include:

- (a) compliance with the Quality Assurance Schedule in the contract for an offshore arrangement, if applicable;⁶
- (b) the need to obtain URDC approval for any exception to normal attendance requirements (see 6.3.1), unless covered by the contract for the offshore arrangement;
- (c) the need for any coursework in the research program to be done on campus at the University unless the required unit or units are formally offered online (may also be covered in the QA schedule or contract);
- (d) the desirability of an interview with the applicant(s) to check English language proficiency as well as research capability etc (see next point, and advice on interviews in section 5.5.2); and
- (e) any other matters such as visits by the offshore student(s) to Australia during candidature, availability and quality of supervision, examination arrangements etc.

5.4.4.17 The DRDC is particularly advised to consider issues of English language competence. While all applicants for admission are required to meet University IELTS requirements, students who remain in a non-English speaking environment offshore may not develop proficiency in English easily. The DRDC may specify

⁵ For further information, see *UC Policy on Quality Assurance for Offshore Teaching* at <https://guard.canberra.edu.au/cocoon/policydb/displayDocument?DocumentId=91> (policy under review).

⁶ Each contract for an offshore arrangement within the scope of the *UC Policy on Quality Assurance for Offshore Teaching* includes a Quality Assurance Schedule specifying requirements relating to the program of studies, admission, resources, delivery of the program at an offshore institution, assessment, student management, testamurs and transcripts. The schedule should be made available to the DRDC when offshore applications within the definition of this section are considered.

further development of English language proficiency in addition to entry requirements.

5.5 The admission process

5.5.1 Summary of the admission process

5.5.1.1 To be admitted to a higher degree research program at the University of Canberra an applicant must:

- (a) meet admission requirements (see 5.3.1);
- (b) be assessed as suitable for admission by the Academic Division; and
- (c) be allocated a place.

5.5.1.2 Admission procedures vary to some extent depending on whether the applicant is a domestic student seeking a Commonwealth-funded place under the RTS, an international fee-payer or a domestic fee-payer. (Scholarships are a separate issue dealt with in section 5.6.) The process for each of these categories is outlined below. Successful applicants are expected to commence at the beginning of the following semester.

5.5.1.3 SAS or UC International should complete initial processing and forward applications to the academic Division for assessment as soon as possible. The progress of applications should be monitored, and decisions on applications not requiring RTS consideration made within two to four weeks. Outcomes should be communicated to applicants promptly.

5.5.1.4 Academic Divisions will designate a staff member to coordinate the admission process for all applications received in the Division. This person will normally be the secretary of the Divisional Research Degrees Committee (DRDC).

5.5.1.5 Applications rejected at any stage during the process should be returned to SAS or UC International with appropriate advice and explanation for the applicant.

Applicants for Research Training Scheme (RTS) places

5.5.1.6 The Research Training Scheme (RTS) is funded by the Australian Government. An RTS place provides the student with an exemption from tuition fees for up to four years (full-time equivalent) for a doctoral degree by research and up to two years (full-time equivalent) for a masters degree by research.⁷

⁷ See DEST Guidelines for the Research Training Scheme at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/programmes_funding/programme_categories/professional_skills/research_training_scheme.htm

5.5.1.7 Admission of applicants for Commonwealth-funded places is a competitive process conducted twice a year (with provision to approve admissions outside this timeframe if required). The process set out in detail in 5.5.2 includes:

- (a) initial review of each application by SAS;
- (b) preparation of the file by the administrative officer in the Division;
- (c) administrative scoring of the application by the Office of Research and Research Degrees (ORRD);
- (d) academic assessment by the Division;
- (e) DRDC decision on whether to recommend the admission, usually on the course convener's advice;
- (f) ranking of all recommended RTS applications by the Division;
- (g) allocation of an RTS place by the University selection committee;
- (h) final Divisional endorsement by the Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee;
- (i) consideration for a scholarship if applicable; and
- (j) offers and acceptances.

International fee-paying applicants

5.5.1.8 The admission process for full fee-paying international students set out in detail in 5.5.2, which may occur at any time of year, includes:

- (a) initial review of the application by UC International;
- (b) academic assessment by the Division;
- (c) a decision on admission by the Divisional Research Degrees Committee (DRDC);
- (d) consideration for a scholarship at the end of the year if applicable; and
- (e) offers and acceptances.

Domestic fee-paying applicants

5.5.1.9 Domestic applicants who are not seeking Commonwealth-funded places are normally subject to the same assessment procedures as RTS applicants except for consideration by the University selection committee.

5.5.2 Admission procedures

Initial review of applications at University level

5.5.2.1 When a domestic application is received by Student and Academic Services, it will:

- (a) record the application;

- (b) check the applicant's compliance with the University's Admission Statute, Rules and guidelines;
- (c) ensure that documentation is complete, and request any missing information;
- (d) attend to matters such as advanced standing and details of previous research candidature if applicable; then
- (e) forward the application to the academic Division for assessment.

5.5.2.2 When an application is received by UC International, it will:

- (a) record the application;
- (b) check that –
 - (i) the applicant meets the University's requirements for competency in written and spoken English (or will meet those requirements before commencing the research program);
 - (ii) any overseas qualification on which the application is based is equivalent to the required Australian qualification in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework;
 - (iii) the applicant complies with the University's Admission Statute, Rules and guidelines; and
 - (iv) information and documentation are complete; then
- (c) forward the application to the relevant Division for assessment.

5.5.2.3 The Divisional administrative officer will organise the student's file; continue to follow up any missing information; forward RTS files to ORRD for scoring before Divisional assessment; initiate Divisional assessment of international applications; and track the progress of each application.

Scoring of domestic applications by ORRD

5.5.2.4 Scoring of RTS applications by ORRD is an administrative procedure intended to check basic requirements for RTS places and scholarships and provide an indication of the applicant's academic background, calibre and suitability. While the applicant's score will be useful in academic assessment of the application by the Division, Divisional evaluation is a separate process applying academic judgement to the applicant, application and research proposal. The final Divisional ranking of applications will not necessarily match the scoring order.

5.5.2.5 Applications are scored on the basis of academic record (highest qualification), publications, research and/or professional experience, referees' reports, and awards and prizes. As scoring can only take account of the information available, applicants should note the importance of providing a complete application and all supporting documents (eg two referee reports). The scoring guidelines and the score sheet are available from ORRD.

5.5.2.6 If, after a scored application is sent to the Division for academic assessment, the ORRD score needs changing (for example, to incorporate a late referee report or re-assess information from the academic perspective), the Divisional administrative officer should inform ORRD, if possible before the ranking and selection process.

Academic assessment by the Division: supervision, research proposal, resources etc

5.5.2.7 The DRDC secretary coordinates the academic assessment of applications in the Division.

5.5.2.8 Applications are assessed by the Division after RTS applications are scored (there is no scoring for international applications). Academic assessment of each application (set out in detail below) involves:

- (a) identifying prospective supervisors;
- (b) evaluating the applicant's research potential and preliminary research proposal (including, where appropriate, the "fit" of the proposed research with the relevant research area's expertise and priorities, and any other strategic considerations);
- (c) confirming the capacity of the research area and the School to accept the applicant and provide resources to support the research; and
- (d) consideration of any other relevant factors such as likelihood of timely completion, equity considerations etc.

5.5.2.9 The outcome of Divisional assessment is the course convener's recommendation to the DRDC to approve or reject the application. Conditional approval may be recommended if appropriate. The DRDC decides admissibility (in the case of RTS applicants, who are then ranked for the allocation of places) or admission (in the case of fee-paying students).

5.5.2.10 Research training places are offered in designated University Research Centres and areas. Where, in exceptional circumstances, an applicant seeks to work with researchers outside a University research area (see 5.2.1), the nominated supervisor or other appropriate authority must attach a statement to the application demonstrating that expertise, resources and research activity in the academic area are sufficient to provide a high-quality research training experience. At least two registered supervisors with expertise in the candidate's research topic must be available.

The applicant's research potential and research proposal

5.5.2.11 The head of the research area or course convener will first assess the application:

- (a) to be satisfied that –
 - (i) the proposed research is aligned with the research area,

- (ii) quality of the applicant, research project and proposal is acceptable,
 - (iii) the applicant meets general admission requirements of the University and special admission requirements of the Division, School, program and/or course (including honours or honours equivalence for applicants to the PhD program),
 - (iv) appropriate supervisors exist within the research area, and
 - (v) resources are available to support the research (see below);
- (b) to evaluate the application including -
- (i) the strength of the research proposal, its significance and its importance to the research area,
 - (ii) the applicant's academic qualifications and achievements, research experience and skills, professional achievements if relevant, and any research-related publications (for RTS applicants, much of this will be encapsulated in the ORRD score),
 - (iii) the referee reports, and
 - (iv) the likelihood of a timely completion; and
- (c) to identify and address other relevant considerations (eg equity, any matters referred to elsewhere in this section).

Supervision

5.5.2.12 If initial assessment is satisfactory, the next step is to identify supervisors for the proposed research (or confirm the suitability and availability of supervisors nominated by the applicant). Requirements, qualifications, appointment and responsibilities of supervisors are set out in Part 4. The chair of the supervisory panel and second supervisor (both of whom need to be registered) should be identified at this point. Other panel members (see section 4.5) may be added later.

5.5.2.13 In identifying possible supervisors for a research project, the Division should seek to ensure that all suitably qualified and interested staff are offered opportunities to undertake research supervision and that supervisory loads are equitably distributed. If several potential supervisors express interest in a project, selection should be made through a consultative process.

5.5.2.14 Prospective supervisors should see the application to ensure that the research project is within their expertise and indicate willingness to supervise in writing.

Resources

5.5.2.15 Applicants will be accepted only if the Division and the research area provide adequate resources, including facilities and funding, to support the research. (Minimum facilities for research candidates are specified at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/policies/minimum-facilities>. Divisional guidelines are published on each Division's website. Research Centres or groups may provide additional resources and financial support.)

5.5.2.16 Resource implications of the proposed research will be assessed by the head of the research area and/or Head of School. This includes supervisory capacity, office and/or laboratory requirements, and support needs (including funding) for activities necessary for conduct of the research, such as travel. Divisional Executive should be consulted if resource requirements are substantial.

5.5.2.17 The appropriate authority should confirm in writing that resources will be made available. Any conditions of admission in regard to availability or non-availability of resources should be clearly specified for the offer letter.

Interview with the applicant

5.5.2.18 An interview may be conducted to assess suitability of the applicant and/or the proposed research project. The head of the research area, course convener or DRDC Chair (in consultation with other staff such as potential supervisors), will decide whether to interview an applicant. Where the applicant is overseas, or it is not otherwise practicable to meet face-to-face, the interview may be conducted by telephone. A written record should be attached to the application file.

5.5.2.19 The purpose of the interview is to satisfy the course convener that:

- (a) the applicant appears capable of performing research at the level required;
- (b) the research proposal appears viable;
- (c) the research proposal is appropriate to the research area; and
- (d) appropriate supervision can be arranged for the applicant.

5.5.2.20 Interviews are particularly recommended to resolve doubt about the applicant's proficiency in the English language, critical thinking ability or depth of research experience, and the nature of the research proposal. An interview may also clarify the applicant's and the University's expectations in regard to matters such as:

- (a) what the Division or research area will provide in the way of facilities and resources, funding for conferences, field trips, administrative needs etc;
- (b) appropriateness of proposed supervisory arrangements; and
- (c) any need for external expertise on the supervisory panel.

5.5.2.21 The DRDC may recommend an interview when it considers the application.

DRDC decision on admissibility or admission

5.5.2.22 When assessment of the application is complete, the course convener will prepare a recommendation for the DRDC. The DRDC Chair may grant executive approval for endorsement at the next Committee meeting. Applications that may be contentious should be referred to the Committee.

5.5.2.23 The documentation provided with the application to the DRDC should:

- (a) address any admission matters particular to the type of program, program or applicant (see Part 3 of this policy) such as honours equivalence for a PhD applicant, advanced standing (including the grounds on which credit is sought and supporting evidence consistent with requirements for the type of degree), and additional conditions of admission for an individual applicant such as supporting studies;
- (b) identify and seek approval for any variations to normal requirements (eg exception to normal attendance requirements, which requires URDC approval - see section 6.3); and
- (c) address matters in 5.4.4 for applicants in special categories (UC staff members, candidates transferring from other institutions, international students who gain permanent residency, and offshore applicants intending to study from their home country).

5.5.2.24 Where the DRDC receives a recommendation that an applicant be admitted, it should:

- (a) satisfy itself that:
 - (i) the proposed research falls within an active research area and is in line with Divisional priorities (taking particular care in assessing applications to work outside a designated research area – see 5.5.2.10);
 - (ii) the proposed supervisors meet qualification and experience requirements set out in Part 4 (including that doctoral students' panels include a member who has supervised a doctoral degree to completion) and, having regard to their existing supervision commitments and study leave plans, are in a position to properly supervise the candidate; and
 - (iii) adequate resources will be provided for the research, including work space and other facilities as well as particular requirements of the project and likely financial expectations of the applicant;
- (b) ensure that the research centre, area or group, *and* the School, with which the applicant will be affiliated, are clearly identified;
- (c) ensure that the academic qualification on which the application is based is in an area of study regarded as appropriate;
- (d) satisfy itself that the applicant appears capable of performing research at the level required;
- (e) consider any special admission requirements relating to the area of study;
- (f) check and document honours equivalence for PhD applicants without Honours 1 or 2A;
- (g) consider any additional conditions of admission which may be required of the applicant;
- (h) consider any credit (advanced standing) for the applicant;
- (i) consider and resolve any request for exception to normal policy and practice;

and

(j) make a decision in accordance with 5.5.2.25.

5.5.2.25 For full fee-paying international students and domestic students not seeking RTS places, the Committee approves admission subject to final endorsement by the Divisional Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee. For RTS applicants, the Committee approves the application to proceed to Divisional ranking and the University selection process.

5.5.2.26 Applications not accepted by the DRDC are returned to SAS or UC International with appropriate information for the applicant. In accordance with the Admission Rules, applicants will be advised of the reason(s) for rejection. Constructive advice should be given where possible. The DRDC secretary will minute this information and notify the course convener and prospective supervisors.

RTS ranking and selection

5.5.2.27 Commonwealth-funded (RTS) places are allocated through a competitive selection process to ensure that places are awarded to the best applicants. Each Division ranks its own RTS applications, which are then brought to a University selection committee chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research). Applications are ranked on the basis of academic merit and research potential. Strategic considerations such as support for University Research Centres and areas may be taken into account.

5.5.2.28 To be eligible for an RTS place, a student must be an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident or New Zealand citizen. (See DEST Guidelines for the RTS at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/programmes_funding/programme_categories/professional_skills/research_training_scheme.htm)

5.5.2.29 The University holds RTS admission rounds twice a year. (The mid-year intake for second semester may be cancelled if places are not available.) The main admission round at the end of the year is coordinated with processes to award postgraduate research scholarships. The number of RTS places to be allocated depends on current and projected RTS student load. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) may allocate RTS places outside the admission rounds. As far as possible, applications considered individually are subject to the same assessment procedures and requirements as other applications.

5.5.2.30 For equity reasons, the University does not permit deferment of RTS places. An applicant who is allocated a place and does not commence the following semester must re-apply (or re-present the application with any updated details) in the next admission round.

5.5.2.31 Outcomes of the RTS selection process are reported to the University Research

Degrees Committee. The URDC (and the Research Committee as appropriate) will monitor selection policy and practice.

5.5.2.32 Most scholarships (see 5.6) are awarded, after the allocation of RTS places, by the Postgraduate Research Scholarships Selection Subcommittee (PGRSSS) of the URDC. In accordance with DEST guidelines, all students awarded Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAs) and Australian Postgraduate Awards (Industry) (APAI) receive RTS places, provided that places are available.

5.5.2.33 RTS selection procedures and responsibilities are as follows:

- (a) ORRD coordinates the process and briefs administrative and academic staff. A pro forma is used to summarise applications and present Divisional rankings to the University selection committee.
- (b) The DRDC Chair is responsible for organising ranking of all RTS applications within the Division and nominating Divisional representatives for the University selection committee. Key dates should be set in consultation with ORRD. Divisional ranking should be done by a small group comprising the DRDC Chair (or nominee if the Chair is not available) and representatives of Research Areas and/or Schools as appropriate, supported by the DRDC secretary. (RTS ranking should be coordinated with scholarships ranking and selection processes and if possible involve the same people – see section 5.6.)
- (c) Criteria to be considered for each application (as set out above) include academic qualifications and calibre of the applicant; availability of supervision and suitability of the panel; strength of the research proposal and significance of the project; relevance of the project to the research area; Research Centre or area with which the applicant will be affiliated; the applicant's research and professional experience; evidence of research aptitude; likelihood of timely completion of the degree taking into account any previous candidature; publications; referees' reports; the ORRD score (reflecting some of these factors); and any other relevant factors.
- (d) Divisional ranking will establish an overall order within which applicants may be grouped according to the strength of the Division's support.
- (e) The Divisional ranking spreadsheet should be forwarded to the HDR coordinator in ORRD before the University selection committee meeting to enable information to be checked and copies made for the committee.
- (f) The Divisional representatives on the University selection committee should have been involved in the ranking and be familiar with the applications. Normally, two academic staff from each Division (including the DRDC Chair if possible) and the DRDC secretary attend the selection meeting. Application files should be brought to the meeting for reference.
- (g) The University selection committee chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) allocates RTS places on the basis of the Divisional rankings.

Conditional approval may be granted where necessary (eg subject to academic results not yet available, proof of qualifications or confirmation of supervisors).

- (h) After the meeting, ORRD forwards the list of approved applicants to the Divisions and SAS. The DRDC secretary compiles a summary sheet for each application (see appendix) with details for the offer letter including the type of research place, course name and number, research area, School, commencement date and estimated completion date, attendance pattern (full- or part-time), members of the supervisory panel, EFTSL (Equivalent Full-Time Student Load) already consumed if applicable, grounds for admission (summary of academic qualifications etc), special requirements or conditions attached to admission, and any other relevant information or comments such as details of credit (advanced standing), transfer, upgrade, etc.

Divisional endorsement

5.5.2.34 Successful applications will be endorsed by the Divisional Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee before files (including summary sheets) are returned to SAS to prepare letters of offer.

Offers and acceptances

5.5.2.35 Offers to domestic and international applicants are made by SAS and UC International respectively. Letters should be sent promptly (within a few days or a week) after applications are approved. Unsuccessful applicants are informed of the reasons for rejection.

5.5.2.36 The application summary sheet prepared by the DRDC secretary (5.5.2.33(h)) is the basis of the offer letter. Successful applicants for places and scholarships will also be advised of:

- (a) the maximum duration of the course;
- (b) the maximum period of any funding that accompanies the offer, if less than the maximum duration of the course; and
- (c) where applicable, implications of undertaking extra units that do not form part of the course requirements.

5.5.2.37 SAS and UC International will keep the DRDC secretary, supervisors and ORRD advised of progress with offers and acceptances.

Commencement

5.5.2.38 Unless otherwise agreed, applicants who accept their places are expected to commence study at the beginning of the following semester. As noted above, deferment of RTS places is not permitted. If commencement is delayed, supervisory arrangements should be re-confirmed before the applicant enrolls. All

enrolments are handled by Student and Academic Services. An applicant becomes a candidate on completing his or her enrolment in the program.

5.6 Award of postgraduate research scholarships

Note: As students who are already enrolled at the University can apply for scholarships, the award of scholarships is not always an admissions matter. It is convenient to include information in this Part of the policy.

5.6.1 General information

5.6.1.1 The University offers postgraduate research scholarships with stipends for domestic and international students. The University recognises the importance of scholarships in attracting high-quality research candidates and seeks to expand its scholarship program whenever opportunities arise. Scholarships are funded by the Australian Government, the University (including the Vice-Chancellor, the University Research Committee⁸, academic Divisions, University Research Centres and areas, and research groups) and external organisations. Collaborations with external partners to provide scholarships are welcomed, and inquiries should be directed to the Director of the Office of Research and Research Degrees (ORRD).

5.6.1.2 Scholarships are awarded on academic merit and research potential. Other considerations may apply as appropriate to the scholarship. Applicants for research scholarships are subject to normal admission requirements, and must meet the admission standards of the University set out in this policy and the University Handbook. Scholars are expected to undertake research in a University Research Centre or area.

5.6.1.3 Students and staff should note that the duration of doctoral research scholarships is normally less than the four years full-time equivalent allowed for candidature. Government-funded scholarships such as APAs, and many University scholarships, are awarded for up to three years with a possible extension of six months.

5.6.1.4 Postgraduate research scholarships policy is set by the University Research Degrees Committee as the relevant committee of Academic Board.⁹ The University Research Committee may be involved in developing scholarship schemes and guidelines.

5.6.1.5 Most research scholarships are centrally administered by Student and Academic

⁸ The University Research Committee also funds ten undergraduate Honours scholarships each year, to promote research and encourage students to continue to higher degrees by research.

⁹ Academic Board approved the transfer of responsibility for the governance and policy of postgraduate research scholarships from the Scholarships and Prizes Committee to the URDC on 5 March 2007.

Services (SAS), but some are managed in the academic Divisions. The Office of Research and Research Degrees is also involved. Responsibilities for administration of scholarships are under review (2006-7).

5.6.1.6 Information on current scholarships is available on the Scholarships website at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/student-services/scholarships/research-scholarships> or, for scholarships not centrally administered, from the relevant academic area. Guidelines for Commonwealth-funded scholarships such as Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAs) and Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (EIPRS) are on the DEST website (see the University's Scholarships website for details). Guidelines for centrally-administered University scholarships are available from SAS.¹⁰

5.6.1.7 Most Government-funded and University scholarships are awarded at the end of each year for commencement the following year. The URDC oversees the selection process outlined below. Scholarships with an external partner or associated with a specific research project (eg Australian Postgraduate Awards (Industry) (APAI) or Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) scholarships) may be awarded at any time of year, normally for commencement the following semester. Selection for these scholarships is usually managed by the academic Division in conjunction with ORRD (see individual scholarship guidelines for details).

5.6.2 Applications

5.6.2.1 For domestic students, the same form is used for RTS places and Scholarships.¹¹ On the form, students have the choice of applying for an RTS place and a scholarship, an RTS place without scholarship, a scholarship only (for continuing students), and a full fee-paying research place. International students must complete a separate application form for scholarships at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/student-services/forms2>

5.6.2.2 Unless advertised otherwise, the closing date for applications for most scholarships for domestic students is 31 October. International students must submit applications by 30 September to be considered for a scholarship for the following year.

5.6.3 Scholarship selection procedures

5.6.3.1 This section provides information on the selection process for scholarships awarded at the end of each year under the auspices of the URDC. Selection

¹⁰ Guidelines for each University scholarship set out the purpose of the scholarship; eligibility criteria; funding, value and benefits to the scholar; number available; closing date; duration; conditions; and method of selection, as well as financial and administrative responsibilities. Staff who need this level of detail on particular scholarships may request the guidelines from Student and Academic Services.

¹¹ *Application for admission to a higher degree by research course for domestic applicants (with or without Scholarship)* at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/student-services/forms2>

procedures for scholarships that are not centrally managed are in accordance with the relevant scholarship guidelines.

- 5.6.3.2** The applicant pool for scholarships is different from the pool of applicants for admission. Scholarship applicants may already be enrolled in a UC research program; are usually required to take up the scholarship full-time; and may be domestic, international, or either, depending on the scholarship. Honours equivalence must be demonstrated for DEST scholarships such as APAs.
- 5.6.3.3** As noted above, processes for allocating RTS places and awarding scholarships should be coordinated and involve the same staff members as far as possible.
- 5.6.3.4** Procedures and responsibilities for the University process to award scholarships at the end of each year are (*Note: As responsibilities have changed since these procedures were determined, details are likely to change in 2007*):
- (a) Student and Academic Services (SAS) organises and administers the selection process in consultation with ORRD and the academic Divisions.
 - (b) Well ahead of time, SAS will ask each Division (Pro Vice-Chancellor and DRDC Chair) to nominate representatives for the Postgraduate Research Scholarships Selection Subcommittee (PGRSSS) of the URDC. As noted, it is desirable for the same Divisional staff to be involved in RTS and scholarships ranking and selection, and it would be appropriate to identify the ranking group for RTS places at the same time. *Note: While the ranking group(s) should be small, care should be taken to ensure the interests of all research areas and groups are represented.* SAS will publish a timeline for scholarships selection and organise briefing for academic and administrative staff.
 - (c) For domestic applicants, SAS maintains a spreadsheet of names and courses of applicants for both RTS places and scholarships, and for scholarship-only applicants. After the closing date for scholarships, the Admissions Officer sends copies of applications for both RTS places and scholarships to Divisions. DRDC secretaries enter pertinent information on their spreadsheet and copy the paperwork to use throughout the RTS and Scholarships selection processes.
 - (d) For international students, UC International provides copies of scholarship applications to SAS to enter on the spreadsheet. DRDC secretaries advise SAS of any additional applicants.
 - (e) To keep track of parts of applications received later, DRDC secretaries should send their updated spreadsheet to SAS each week during the process.
 - (f) SAS sends the Divisions the spreadsheet for scholarship-only and international applicants, with copies of the applications. A list of scholarships to be awarded, with guidelines for each scholarship, should be made available for the Divisional ranking meeting.

- (g) Divisions will rank their RTS and scholarship applicants, producing separate rankings for each purpose on the same pro forma. Before ranking scholarship applicants, the ranking group should ensure that each applicant for a Scholarship is eligible for that Scholarship, of suitable academic merit and research potential, and meets admission requirements of the University and the proposed research program, and that the proposed research falls within a University research area. The group will also check and document the grounds for Honours equivalence for PhD applicants. Academic judgement on the calibre of the applicant are summarised under the heading “Division’s reasons for ranking”. Rankings are reported to SAS to create a consolidated list of scholarship applicants.
- (h) SAS forwards its consolidated scholarships list to each Division with paperwork for applicants from the other two Divisions. (DRDC secretaries may need additional copies of their own applications if Divisional representatives for the scholarships committee are not the same people used for RTS selection.)
- (i) The University selection committee allocates RTS places (see 5.5.2), and ORRD advises SAS.
- (j) The Postgraduate Research Scholarships Selection Subcommittee meets to determine an order of merit for each type of scholarship on offer, and award scholarships to the top applicants, on the basis of the Divisional rankings. A essential part of this task is to confirm each applicant’s suitability as in (f) above and ensure that scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit. The Subcommittee’s order of merit should extend well beyond the number of scholarships available to allow for refusals and re-allocations.
- (k) The results of the scholarships selection meeting are presented to the URDC for endorsement.
- (l) SAS makes scholarship offers to successful applicants. *To secure the best candidates, it is essential that offers are despatched immediately.*
- (m) SAS and UC International manage acceptances and re-allocation of declined scholarships in consultation with the chair of the selection subcommittee or the URDC as needed. DRDC secretaries, supervisors and ORRD are kept informed of progress.
- (n) The selection process and outcomes are reported to the URDC, University Research Committee and DEST as required.

5.6.3.5 Individual responsibilities with regard to scholarships (DRDC Chair, UC International, SAS, Budget Manager Financial Services etc, and scholars) are set out in the relevant scholarship guidelines.

5.6.3.6 SAS will report on the offer, admission and progress of scholarship recipients to relevant committees, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), UC International, the Divisions, and ORRD, as required. The DRDC is responsible for monitoring

scholars' academic progress (see Part 6) and reporting any concerns to SAS, UC International, ORRD and relevant committees, as appropriate.

5.6.3.7 Further advice on UC research scholarships is available from Student and Academic Services or ORRD.