

Higher Degree by Research Enrolment and Changes to Candidature Policy

Date of effect	March 21 st 2011
Approval	University Research Committee Meeting 11/1:10 February 2011 Academic Board Meeting
Documents replaced by this policy	<i>Gold Book</i> Part 6: Sections 6.3 and 6.8 and <i>UC Sponsorship for Over-time Domestic Postgraduate Research Students Policy</i>
Procedures and/or guidelines supporting this policy	Procedures are contained within the Policy

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A. Introduction

Purpose

1. This policy sets out the principles and procedures for enrolment and changes to candidature within a higher degree by research (HDR) course.

Scope

2. This policy applies to all candidates enrolled in HDR courses at the University of Canberra, and to the staff involved in HDR supervision and management at the University.

Legislation

3. This policy is governed by the *Academic Progress Statute 1995, University of Canberra (Courses and Awards) Statute 2010, University of Canberra Academic Progress Rules 2009* and the *University of Canberra Courses and Awards (Courses of Study) Rules 2010*.

B. Principles

4. An HDR candidate is required to ensure that course enrolment is maintained. Maintenance of enrolment in an HDR course is conditional on evidence of satisfactory progress.
5. A normal full-time commitment to a HDR course is at least 35 hours per week. Normal part-time commitment is at least 18 hours per week.
6. With due authorisation, a candidate may transfer from full-time to part-time study or from part-time to full-time study. Any change of study mode without due authorisation may lead to the implementation of a process for early intervention.
7. With the exception of those enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy (by Publication) course, each candidate will be enrolled on a provisional basis until the achievement of Confirmation of Candidature (see *Higher Degree by Research Milestones Policy* for the requirements and procedures for Confirmation of Candidature).
8. Candidates will be encouraged and assisted as far as possible to complete the work required to take out the degree within the maximum duration of the course and time limits of any funding (e.g. Research Training Scheme funding places for domestic candidates).
9. With the endorsement of the Supervisory Panel, a candidate may apply to make changes to the candidature. All changes to candidature require appropriate approval.

C. Procedures

Enrolment conditions

10. Except in approved circumstances, an HDR candidate will maintain continuous enrolment in the course for the duration of candidature.
11. The Research Students' Office will re-enrol a candidate in the appropriate units each year following the submission of a complete Annual Progress Report that indicates that satisfactory progress has been made in the previous year. HDR candidates cannot self-enrol.
12. Candidature will be deemed to have lapsed if the candidate, through failure to submit a satisfactory progress report, cannot be re-enrolled.
13. Except with the permission of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) (DVC-R), a candidate enrolled in an HDR course may not enrol concurrently in another award course. An application for concurrent enrolment must be directed via the Research Students' Office to the DVC-R and be accompanied by a brief justification and the Chair of the Supervisory Panel's endorsement.
14. At the discretion of the DVC-R, a candidate who is permitted to enrol concurrently in another course and who is granted leave may be required to intermit all courses in which he or she is currently enrolled.

15. As per the University's *Email Policy*, a candidate wishing to contact the University regarding enrolment, course progress or administrative matters must, for identity verification purposes, send the email from the University email account provided to them upon admission.

On-campus attendance

16. The Associate Dean Research (ADR) of the Faculty or the Director of the University Research Centre (URC) may, on the recommendation of the Chair of the Supervisory Panel, permit a candidate to pursue work away from the University that is connected with the research for the degree. During provisional candidature, such permission may only be granted under special circumstances.
17. An HDR candidate will be required to spend a period of at least twelve months full-time equivalent at the University during the course of his or her candidature.
18. Exceptions to Paragraph 16 may be considered by the ADR or Director at the point of application for admission into the course. The proposed Chair of the Supervisory Panel should apply on behalf of the applicant as part of the Faculty or URC assessment process for admission to the course. A shorter period of on-campus attendance will be subject to the following conditions:
 - the candidate spends at least six months (over the course of candidature) on campus, especially during the early phase of candidature. This is to allow face-to-face contact with the Supervisory Panel to discuss the planning and execution of the research project and to familiarise the candidate with the research environment at the University of Canberra;
 - there is facility for frequent and high quality contact between the candidate and the Supervisory Panel (e.g. by Skype, email, telephone);
 - coursework required as part of the course can be undertaken online;
 - as a remote candidate, the candidate will have access to the literature and resources required for the research project;
 - if the research project involves experimentation, provision will be made for the Chair of the Supervisory Panel to visit the site occasionally; and
 - as a remote candidate, the candidate is in an environment that has a research culture and provides the opportunity for exchange of ideas and critical engagement with others regarding the testing-out of research conclusions and methods.
19. An exception to the rule in Paragraph 16 must be approved before an offer of place is made to the applicant. At the time of approval, agreement will be reached on how the transport costs of the candidate and the Supervisory Panel will be met.

Offshore enrolment

20. The attendance rules in Paragraphs 16, 18 and 19 also apply to applicants who wish to undertake most of their candidature outside Australia.
21. Further to the conditions set out in Paragraph 18, considerations when reviewing an application for mainly offshore enrolment in a HDR course include:
 - any issues relating to languages other than English and the development of English language competence;

- arrangements for approval of milestones, including the presentation of the confirmation seminar;
- the availability of Faculty/URC resources to support special arrangements required to maintain candidature; and
- the availability of suitable supervision at the candidate's physical location and the financial arrangements required to support this situation.

Course duration

Doctoral courses¹

22. Except in approved circumstances, the work for a doctoral degree shall be completed and the thesis submitted:
- in the case of a full-time candidate, not less than two years and not more than four years from the date of commencement of candidature; and
 - in the case of a part-time candidate, not less than four years and not more than eight years from the date of commencement of candidature.
 - duration is calculated on a pro-rata basis for a candidate mixing full-time and part-time candidature in the course of his or her enrolment.
23. The duration of a Professional Doctorate course may be reduced by credit granted for coursework units. Credit granted for coursework would not reduce the duration of the course under the minimum period of two years (FTE).
24. The DVC-R, on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty or URC, may make an exception to the minimum duration of a doctoral course for a candidate. This exception would usually be to permit submission of a thesis before the minimum duration of the course had been reached. To approve a request for early submission, the DVC-R will require assurance that:
- the candidate's progress has been satisfactory and the thesis and the research upon which it is based is ethically sound and of an examinable standard; and
 - the early submission of the thesis has the support of the host Faculty or URC, as evidenced by the Chair and ADR's advice that the thesis would not benefit from further work.

Masters by research courses

25. Except in approved circumstances, the work for a masters by research degree shall be completed and the thesis submitted:
- in the case of a full-time candidate, not less than one year and not more than two years from the date of commencement of candidature; and
 - in the case of a part-time candidate, not less than two years and not more than four years from the date of commencement of candidature.
 - duration is calculated on a pro-rata basis for a candidate mixing full-time and part-time candidature in the course of his or her enrolment.

¹ The Doctor of Philosophy (by Publication) is not subject to the duration rules listed here under 'Doctoral courses'. See instead Paragraph 19 of the *Doctor of Philosophy (by Publication) Policy* for duration rules.

26. The duration of a masters by research course may be reduced by credit granted for coursework units. Credit granted for coursework would not reduce the duration of the course under the minimum period of one year (FTE).
27. The DVC-R, on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty or URC, may make an exception to the minimum duration of a masters by research course for a candidate. See Paragraph 24 for the conditions that must be met for the DVC-R to consider such an exception.

Extension to candidature

28. The University receives no Commonwealth Government funding to support HDR course enrolment beyond the maximum course durations stated in Paragraphs 22 and 27.
29. Continuing enrolment of a domestic candidate who has exceeded his or her Research Training Scheme entitlement will be subject to the payment of tuition fees by the candidate.
30. An eligible domestic candidate may apply to the Dean of the Faculty or Director of the URC for an extension of tuition fee support via an overtime sponsorship. Sponsorships are funded by the host Faculty or URC. In order to be considered, application must be made by 1 January for tuition fee support for the first six months of the calendar year and by 1 July for support for the second six months of the year. The completed Overtime Sponsorship Form must be endorsed by the Chair of the Supervisory Panel, and must be accompanied by a statement from the candidate that provides:
 - a summary of the work completed;
 - outline of the work remaining;
 - a detailed research plan demonstrated a planned completion within the sponsorship period; and
 - as an attachment, the most recent Progress Report.
31. In order to be eligible for overtime sponsorship, a candidate must:
 - currently be enrolled at University of Canberra in either a doctoral or a masters by research course;
 - have completed his or her data collection or equivalent;
 - be in the writing up stage of the thesis development; and
 - not be a University of Canberra academic staff member.
32. The Dean or Director will assess each application on the basis of merit, including the likelihood that the candidate will complete within the period of sponsorship.
33. Overtime sponsorship will be offered for a limit of six months enrolment. Further overtime sponsorship will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and must be applied for through the submission of the documentation outlined in Paragraph 30. Applications for overtime sponsorship beyond the initial six months must additionally demonstrate that the candidate's progress has been delayed because of circumstances beyond his or her control that relate solely to the research project (e.g. dissertation material destroyed in a fire, new government legislation requires a response in the final thesis write up).
34. Provided other criteria for enrolment are met, a candidate may continue enrolment in the HDR course as a fee-paying student after the overtime sponsorship has expired. Australian citizens charged tuition fees are eligible for FEE-HELP assistance.

35. Extensions to candidature are separate to extensions to scholarships. The various scholarships available are governed by different terms and conditions, and many are for periods less than the maximum duration of candidature. Please see the *Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Policy* for details of HDR scholarship scheme conditions.

Employment

36. A full-time HDR candidate is expected to devote at least 35 hours per week to research project work, less four weeks a year recreation leave plus statutory holidays and the University Christmas break.
37. Full-time candidates are permitted to undertake a limited amount of paid employment: no more than 240 hours per year. Generally the employment may not exceed eight hours during normal working hours in a week. If the part-time employment consists of tutoring or lecturing, the total of eight hours a week or 240 hours a year will include the time required for preparation and marking. The University does not require a candidate to undertake employment. Candidates are asked to state on their Annual Progress Report how much part-time employment they have undertaken during the year.

Changes to candidature

Study mode

38. A candidate may transfer from full-time to part-time study or vice versa with the written approval of the Chair of the Supervisory Panel. The changes will be effected from the beginning of the teaching period following the request. Requests must be made before 1 January for the first six months of the calendar year and before 1 July for the second six months. Requests may be made via the Annual Progress Report or an email to the Research Students' Office.

Intermission

39. Intermission is the voluntary suspension of studies by a candidate for a specified period, approved by the ADR (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC.
40. Within the maximum duration of candidature for an HDR degree, a candidate may take intermission from the course on medical or personal grounds for a cumulative period of up to twelve months. Intermission will normally be granted for one six month period at a time.
41. The ADR (or delegate) or Director may grant a candidate cumulative leave in excess of twelve months where there are exceptional circumstances beyond the control of the candidate. Where this exceptional intermission is granted, the University will endeavour to ensure, but cannot guarantee, that appropriate supervision and resources will be available to support the candidate on return from intermission.
42. The following procedures apply in the consideration of an application for intermission:
- an HDR Intermission Form must be completed by the candidate and endorsed by the Chair of the Supervisory Panel before being reviewed by the ADR (or delegate) or Director. An approved application for intermission must then be forwarded to the Research Students' Office to be officially recorded;
 - if intermission is approved, the minimum and maximum durations of the course will be adjusted accordingly by adding the length of the approved intermission;
 - if an application for intermission is rejected, the candidate has the option of continuing enrolment or discontinuing from the course. A candidate who

discontinues may apply for readmission in the future but should note that previous progress in the HDR course may be taken into account;

- a candidate granted leave must inform the Research Students' Office of his or her intent to resume enrolment at least two weeks before to the approved date of return in order to reactive candidature; and
- candidature may be deemed to have lapsed through failure to inform the Research Students' Office of the intent to resume enrolment after a period of intermission.

43. Candidature will be considered lapsed if a candidate takes leave from the course without approval.

Change of Supervisory Panel

44. An HDR candidate is supervised by a panel rather than a single supervisor. A Chair of the panel is appointed. The Chair assumes primary responsibility for supervision and acts as convenor of the panel.

45. A candidate or a panel member may request changes in Supervisory Panel arrangements during candidature. A change in panel arrangements may occur because of a change in circumstances for either the candidate or a member of the panel. All parties affected must be informed in advance of any circumstances that may warrant a change of arrangements (e.g. a supervisor going on OSP) to ensure that appropriate supervision of the candidate is not disrupted.

46. Possible reasons for a change in Supervisory Panel arrangements include:

- a change in the direction or scope of the research project requiring different supervisory expertise;
- a change in the candidate's enrolment (such as the candidate changing from part-time to full-time enrolment or the candidate temporarily moving to another institution for research purposes);
- a change in the Supervisory Panel workload share (e.g. where a secondary supervisor takes on more of the primary supervisory workload than the primary supervisor);
- a panel member going on extended leave or on the Outside Studies Program; or
- an irreconcilable difference of opinion between the candidate and a member of the Supervisory Panel as to the direction of the research project.

47. The ADR (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC is responsible for approving a change to a panel. The candidate and the panel will submit a Change of Supervisory Panel form to the ADR or Director. If approved, the form is then forwarded to the Research Students' Office to officially record the change of arrangements.

48. Any change to a Supervisory Panel must maintain the compliance with the *Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Candidates Policy*.

Change in the direction or scope of research

49. A change in the direction or scope of a candidate's research project may warrant a modification in candidature arrangements. Any change to the project must be discussed in advance between the candidate and the Supervisory Panel.

50. A minor change to the research project may include such matters as a change of title of the research project or thesis or a minor change in the methods employed in the

research. Minor changes should be noted in the candidate's next Annual Progress Report.

51. A major change in the direction or scope of the research is one that may:

- have resource implications for the candidate and the host Faculty or URC;
- have implications for supervisory arrangements and the academic expertise involved in the supervision; or
- effect the completion time for thesis submission.

52. A major change in the direction or scope of the research may instigate a number of possible changes to candidature, including:

- a change in Supervisory Panel arrangements to incorporate the appropriate expertise (see Paragraphs 45 to 48 for procedures);
- a change in attendance status if additional off-campus data gathering or experimentation is required to complete the project;
- transferring from a Professional Doctorate to a PhD course (see Paragraphs 54 and 55 for procedures);
- upgrading from a masters to a doctoral course (see Paragraphs 56 to 58 for procedures); or
- transferring the current level of study to a different specialisation and Faculty or URC within the University (See Paragraph 53 for procedures).

53. A candidate enrolled in a research course specialisation in one Faculty or URC seeking transfer to another UC specialisation at the same level of study firstly must discuss the possible transfer with the current Supervisory Panel. Considerations include:

- written confirmation that the proposed new host Faculty or URC is willing to accept responsibility for the candidate's resource support and supervision;
- approval of the transfer by the current host Faculty or URC;
- identification of revised Supervisory Panel with appropriate availability and expertise;
- time remaining in candidature; and
- any implications a transfer may have on the retention of a candidate's scholarship.

Following the resolution of these considerations above, the candidate must complete a Research Degree Application Form and include with the application a revised proposal supporting the transfer. The application must also include a letter of support for the transfer from the proposed new Supervisory Panel. These documents are to be submitted to the Research Students' Office.

Transfer between research courses (Professional Doctorate to PhD)

54. A candidate enrolled in a research Professional Doctorate (PD) (where the research component makes up at least two thirds of the credit points allocated to the course) who wishes to transfer to a PhD course in the same field of study must have completed sufficient study in the PD course to allow an assessment of his or her capacity to undertake original and independent research. This would normally mean that a candidate would complete the required coursework components and approximately six months equivalent full-time candidature of the thesis component prior to application to transfer. Furthermore, a transfer would normally take place not later than twenty-four months (full-

time equivalent) after initial enrolment. It is expected that, prior to applying to transfer, a candidate will have achieved Confirmation of Candidature in the PD course.

55. Procedures for a transfer are as follows:

- an application for transfer from PD to PhD candidature must be supported by the Supervisory Panel;
- the process for transferring involves the candidate preparing all documentation to allow the Faculty or URC to make a confident assessment of the candidate's ability to successfully complete the PhD thesis, including:
 - a written justification for the transfer, that demonstrates the candidate's awareness of the differing requirements and standards for the PhD;
 - evidence of the candidate's ability to work to meet the requirements and standards of the PhD (e.g. draft chapters of the thesis); and
 - a copy of the candidate's most recent Annual Progress Report or Progress Update Report.
- once the Chair is satisfied that the documentation for the transfer is appropriately prepared to go forward for assessment, the Chair will organise assessors for, and publically advertise, a transfer seminar.
- the transfer seminar and all documentation will be evaluated by at least two assessors chosen by the Chair, according to the following criteria:
 - must meet academic requirements for the appointment of doctoral examiners (see *Examination of Higher Degree by Research Theses Policy*);
 - must have scholarly expertise in the discipline area/s of the candidate; and
 - must not be a member (past or present) of the candidate's Supervisory Panel.
- the Chair will ensure that the assessors receive all upgrade documentation at least one week prior to the seminar.
- the seminar will be followed by a closed session in which the assessors meet with the candidate and Supervisory Panel for further feedback. Each assessor will complete and submit a Transfer Assessor Report Form to the Chair.
- following positive assessments of the transfer seminar, the Chair will prepare a brief recommendation supporting the transfer. The recommendation should cover the following:
 - reasons for recommending the transfer;
 - the level of the candidate's current research and written work; and
 - an estimation of the period required to complete candidature in the new course.
- the Chair will submit the justification, along with the assessor reports and documentation, to the ADR (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC.
- the ADR (or delegate) Director is responsible for final approval of a transfer from a PD to a PhD course in the same field of study.

- the ADR (or delegate) or Director will forward all transfer documents (including final approval) to the Research Students' Office. The transfer cannot be processed until the Research Students' Office receives this documentation.

Upgrade from a masters to doctoral course

56. A candidate who is enrolled in a masters by research course who wishes to upgrade to a doctoral course in the same field of study must have completed sufficient study in the masters course to allow an assessment of his or her capacity to undertake original and independent research. This would normally mean that a candidate would complete the required coursework components and approximately nine to twelve months equivalent full-time candidature of the thesis component prior to application to transfer. Furthermore, a transfer would normally take place no later than eighteen months (full-time equivalent) after initial enrolment.
57. Due consideration must be given to the potential difficulties a candidate seeking to upgrade at an advanced stage of a masters may face. Problems may be encountered in developing the research project to a new conceptual level or integrating research from the masters into a coherent doctoral thesis. A candidate seeking to transfer at this stage should consider completing the masters degree and then enrolling in a doctorate.
58. Procedures for an upgrade are as follows:
- an upgrade from masters to doctoral candidature must be supported by the Supervisory Panel;
 - in considering an application for upgrade, the Faculty or URC will require assurance that:
 - the candidate has demonstrated a capacity to undertake work at the more advanced level;
 - the nature of the proposed research topic is substantial enough to warrant the expansion of the research framework; and
 - the definition of the project is such that the candidate is highly likely to complete a doctoral thesis that will make a significant contribution to knowledge;
 - a case for upgrading which simply asserts either that the area is large enough to warrant an expanded scale of activity or that the candidate has received exceptional grades in his or her masters units will not be considered. It will be necessary to demonstrate that the analytical framework has been considered and is appropriate;
 - the process for upgrading involves the candidate preparing all documentation to allow the Faculty or URC to make a confident assessment of the candidate's ability to successfully complete a doctoral thesis, including:
 - a full doctoral research proposal;
 - at least two chapters of the draft thesis, or equivalent work in published (or accepted for publication) scholarly papers; and
 - a copy of the candidate's most recent Annual Progress Report or Progress Update Report;
 - once the Chair is satisfied that the documentation for upgrade is prepared to a level that will pass external assessment, the Chair will organise assessors for, and publically advertise, an upgrade seminar;

- the upgrade seminar and all documentation will be evaluated by at least two assessors chosen by the Chair, according to the following criteria:
 - must meet academic requirements for the appointment of doctoral examiners (see *Examination of Higher Degree by Research Theses Policy*);
 - must have scholarly expertise in the discipline area/s of the candidate;
 - must not be a member (past or present) of the candidate's Supervisory Panel; and
 - at least one assessor must be external to the host Faculty or URC, and preferably the University;
- the Chair will ensure that the assessors receive all upgrade documentation at least one week prior to the seminar.
- The seminar will be followed by a closed session in which the assessors meet with the candidate and Supervisory Panel for further feedback. Each assessor will complete and submit an Assessor Report Form to the Chair.
- following positive assessments of the upgrade seminar, the Chair will prepare a brief recommendation supporting the upgrade. The recommendation should cover the following:
 - reasons for recommending the upgrade;
 - the level of the candidate's current research and written work; and
 - an estimation of the period required to complete candidature in the new course;
- the Chair will submit the justification, along with all upgrade documentation and assessor reports, to the ADR (or delegate) of the Faculty or Director of the URC;
- the ADR (or delegate) or Director is responsible for final approval of an upgrade from a masters by research course to a doctoral course in the same field of study;
- the ADR (or delegate) or Director will forward all upgrade documents (including documented final approval) to the Research Students' Office. The upgrade cannot be processed until the Research Students' Office receives this documentation;
- a candidate who successfully upgrades will be considered to have achieved Confirmation of Candidature in the doctoral course.

Withdrawal from the course

59. A candidate may withdraw from the HDR course at any time. A candidate considering withdrawal is strongly encouraged to discuss the situation with the Supervisory Panel before making a final decision.
60. A candidate who intends to withdraw should lodge a completed Notification of Discontinuation Form with the Research Students' Office. Withdrawal from the course will not be finalised until the Research Students' Office has been notified by the candidate of their decision to withdraw.
61. A candidate who has withdrawn from an HDR course may apply for readmission at a future date. The University's consideration of the application will be subject to the continuing currency of the research, the currency of the research skills of the candidate, the previous progress of the candidate and the availability of appropriate supervision and resources.

Other related documents

62. Documents related to this policy are:

- [Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Candidates Policy](#)
- [Admission to Higher Degree by Research Courses Policy](#)
- *Higher Degree by Research Academic Progress Policy*
- *Higher Degree by Research Milestones Policy (Pending)*
- *Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Policy*
- [Examination of Higher Degree by Research Theses Policy](#)
- [Doctor of Philosophy \(by Publication\) Policy](#)
- [University of Canberra Email Policy](#)
- [University of Canberra Credit Policy](#)
- *Student Grievance Resolution Policy*