

Code of good practice: research degrees management and supervision

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Foreword

The University of South Australia is an Australian leader in innovative research conducted in partnership with industry and the professions. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students, as research trainees, contribute to the University's research culture and research outcomes. and it is a University priority to continuously improve research education within a research-rich environment (UniSA 2005, University Vision Statement).

Integral to a quality research education experience is the provision of effective research management and supervision. Postgraduate Research Degree Supervisors (supervisors) play a central role in guiding HDR students in their research project, ensuring they meet milestones and complete their degrees on time. Responsibility for HDR students' progress is shared across the University and this code outlines the respective responsibilities of those involved in the management and administration of research degrees at all levels.

Definitions

The term Division or Institute also refers to the Centre for Regional Engagement.

Divisional Research Management Committee (DRMC) means the Research or Research Degrees Management Committee established by the Division, Institute or CRE.

The term Dean, Research also refers to their equivalents in Divisions, Institutes and CRE.

The term Research Degrees Coordinator also refers to their equivalents, including Research Education: Portfolio Leaders and Program Directors: Professional Doctorate (Research).

1. The University

The University has established the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), a sub-committee of Academic Board, which has the delegated authority in matters relating to research education and training. [View the [Terms of Reference](#).]

The University aims to foster and preserve the scholarly values of curiosity, experimentation, critical appraisal and integrity and to foster these values in its HDR students. All HDR students and supervisors are required to comply with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Australian Code), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (National Statement) and the [Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes](#) and adhere to high standards of academic research integrity and honesty at all times. [See Clauses 13 and 14 of the Academic Regulations for Higher Degree by Research programs and Appendix 5 attached to the Regulations.]

2. Responsibilities of Research Degrees Committee and the Dean of Graduate Studies

Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and the Dean of Graduate Studies are responsible for establishing a policy and quality assurance framework for research degrees management and supervision¹. The management of research degree programs, including academic regulations of these programs, are generally devolved to the Division and Institute level.

The quality assurance framework will ensure that:

2.1 requirements and entry standards for the research degree are clearly specified and are set to ensure that enrolling HDR students are likely to have the capacity to succeed, given their own commitment to complete;

- 2.2** rights and responsibilities of HDR students, the University, Divisions, Institutes, Schools and their staff are clearly documented and readily available to HDR students, including policy and academic regulations governing the degree, progress reporting and, where appropriate, scholarship conditions;
- 2.3** appropriate training in relation to responsible conduct of research is made available to all HDR students;
- 2.4** standards exist for qualifications, training and support of academic staff who supervise HDR students, and that a process exists by which assistance may be sought should it be required;
- 2.5** HDR students have access to adequate support, facilities and resources for conducting their research program, including Research Education Support Activities;
- 2.6** the status of intellectual property and commercial considerations arising from HDR students' research are defined and available to HDR students;
- 2.7** procedures are in place by which either the HDR student or the supervisor may raise and seek resolution of grievances or appeals;
- 2.8** there are explicit procedures for the examination process, including clear guidelines for examiners and other parties, outlining institutional expectations for the particular degree and any requirements for confidentiality;
- 2.9** completion times are monitored;
- 2.10** RDC is responsible for approving recommendations from Divisional Research Management Committees regarding candidature, making decisions on each HDR student's completion of requirements for the award of a research degree and for recommending to Council that Doctoral degrees be awarded.

3. Responsibilities of Deans Research

Each Division, Institute and the Centre for Regional Engagement (CRE) has a Research Management Committee, the Chair of which is the Dean, Research. Each Divisional Research Management Committee is responsible for monitoring and ensuring the effective conduct of research education management within the area and for ensuring that the area adheres to relevant policies, regulations and codes. Responsibility for research degrees may be delegated to the Dean, Research who normally chairs the DRMC. The Dean, Research is required to complete authorisations at various points of candidature in accordance with the academic regulations.

Through the DRMC, the Dean, Research will:

- 3.1 make academic decisions and consequent recommendations to RDC on matters pertaining to postgraduate research including HDR student admissions, scholarships, research proposal assessments, performance reviews, variations to candidature and examinations;
- 3.2 working with the Research Degree Coordinator to oversee matters related to the supervision of HDR students;
- 3.3 monitor and report on HDR student progress within the Division/ Institute/ CRE;
- 3.4 report on corporate planning targets and quality assurance mechanisms within the Division/ Institute/ CRE;
- 3.5 determine whether staff members meet the eligibility criteria to supervise at the relevant level, in accordance with Research Policy [RES 18.0 Register of Current Higher Degree by Research Supervisors](#);
- 3.6 ensure that each HDR student has a principal and associate supervisor appointed and ensure that all supervisors are sufficiently expert in the area of research to be able to offer the HDR student quality supervision;
- 3.7 make every endeavour to locate another supervisor in the event that alternative supervisory arrangements are required;
- 3.8 provide a research-rich education environment by contributing to Research Education Support Activities to foster the development of Research Degree Graduate Qualities and productive intellectual, professional and ethical relationships between staff and HDR students and among HDR students;
- 3.9 address grievances or appeals involving Research Degree Coordinators, supervisors and HDR students in accordance with University policy and regulations.

4. Responsibilities of Institute Directors and Heads of Schools

The Institute Director and Head of School, will assign responsibility for:

- 4.1 appointing a senior academic staff member to act as Research Degree Coordinator who will represent the area as a member of the Divisional Research Management Committee;
- 4.2 ensuring that adequate resources are provided to assist Research Degree Coordinators and supervisors in the performance of their duties;
- 4.3 ensuring research degree coordinators provide HDR students with relevant information upon commencement of candidature, including:

- 4.3.1** policy/ guidelines governing ethics, compliance, intellectual property, authorship, research misconduct and copyright;
- 4.3.2** support, facilities and resources available to HDR students within the University;
- 4.3.3** appeal, at risk and grievance procedures;
- 4.4** negotiating supervisor workload at commencement of candidature such as to provide the HDR student with appropriate and adequate supervision throughout candidature, and renegotiating as required. Such workload is to be distributed between the principal/ co supervisor and associate supervisor(s);
- 4.5** ensuring each HDR student has resources available according to the [Statement of Minimum Resources for HDR students](#) and providing project-specific funds for the HDR student to conduct the research project in accordance with the approved research proposal;
- 4.6** in conjunction with the Dean, Research, appointing a substitute supervisor where a supervisor is absent for six weeks or more;
- 4.7** ensuring that a local area OHSW & IM system that is aligned with the University's OHSW & IM Plan is in place for each HDR student to follow.

5. Responsibilities of Research Degree Coordinators

The Research Degree Coordinator is responsible to the Head of School/ Institute Director for the oversight of all matters related to the supervision of higher degree by research (HDR) students. The Research Degree Coordinator reports higher degree research activities to the Division's Dean, Research.

The Research Degree Coordinator is responsible for:

5.1 Administering higher degrees by research in the school/ institute/ centre

As a member of the Division's Research Management Committee, Research Degree Coordinators:

- Assess applications for HDR student places and scholarships in conjunction with the Head of School and Dean, Research, taking into account available facilities and resources as per the Statement of minimum resources for higher degree by research students;
- Coordinate transparent processes for allocation of supervisors according to School/Institute guidelines/procedures;
- Coordinate the submission of research proposals to the review panel and to the Division Research Management Committee;

- Coordinate and monitor planning, review and report of progress and undertake at least two documented planning and review sessions each year (minor and major reviews) with each student and their principal supervisor;
- Monitor for issues and/or conflicts between HDR students and supervisors and initiate strategies to reduce the impact of these issues on student progress;
- Act as mediator to facilitate the resolution of conflict between HDR students and supervisors;
- In the event of unsatisfactory student progress, consult with the HDR student, supervisor(s), and Dean, Research to determine the most appropriate course of action, as per the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research;
- In the event of suspected research misconduct by a student, facilitate the inquiry process as required (see [Appendix 5 to the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research](#));
- Authorise variations to candidature;
- Monitor the selection of examiners and the outcomes of examinations and where required, assist supervisors to develop recommendations for Examinations and HDR Academic Quality Panel.

5.2 Helping to build a research rich education environment

- ensure HDR students are provided with relevant information upon commencement of candidature:
 - policy/ guidelines governing ethics, compliance, intellectual property, authorship, research misconduct and copyright;
 - appeal, at risk and grievance procedures;
 - support, facilities and resources available to HDR students within the University;
- In conjunction with supervisors, direct HDR students towards research education resources, including Research Education Support Activities;
- Facilitate the development of appropriate seminar opportunities at the local level and encourage participation of HDR students and supervisors;
- Assist supervisors to gain access to relevant policies, procedures and guidelines governing research education and research degree supervision, the area's procedures, and information about the University's supervisor development program.

5.3 Contributing to quality assurance

- Monitor the quality and viability of the research education environment in accordance with the University's policies, including Quality Assurance and Improvements in Higher Degrees by Research, the Code of Good Practice: Research Degrees Management and Supervision, and the Statement of Minimum Resources for Higher Degree by Research Students.

6. Responsibilities of Research Degree Supervisors

Supervisors are expected to supervise their HDR students in accordance with the responsibilities below, to foster research integrity and maximise the opportunities for timely and successful completions by:

6.1 being familiar with, abiding by and guiding HDR students in relation to the University's policies, procedures, regulations, guidelines and codes relevant to higher degrees by research, including intellectual property, ethics and compliance, authorship arrangements, copyright and research misconduct and [Research Degree Graduate Qualities](#);

6.2 remaining aware of current supervisory practices and the policy environment by participating in supervisor development and awareness programs provided by the University, as per [RES Policy 18, Register of Current Higher Degree by Research Supervisors](#);

6.3 establishing with the commencing HDR student and review as necessary the mutual expectations and obligations outlined in the [Welcome Checklist and Statement of Agreement](#);

6.4 providing the resources for their HDR students to undertake their proposed program of research in their School/Institute/Centre;

6.5 communicating/meeting regularly with their HDR student in order to provide timely advice and guidance in all matters related to research conduct and overseeing all stages of the research process, including identifying the research objectives and approach, obtaining ethics and other approvals, conducting the research and reporting the research outcomes in appropriate fora and media;

6.6 satisfying themselves that the research methods and outcomes of those HDR students under their supervision are appropriate and valid;

6.7 ensuring that, prior to data collection, ethics and compliance approvals for the research program as necessary have been obtained, and that the HDR student adopts ethical and safe working practices in places of study and work and complies with occupational health, safety, welfare and injury management guidelines;

6.8 establishing supervisory responsibilities and reporting processes for the associate supervisor, who provides support to the principal supervisor: The associate supervisor should be involved as soon as practicable in the development of the HDR student's research proposal and should maintain a level of communication with the HDR student and the principal supervisor to allow adequate supervision whenever necessary;

6.9 establishing supervisory responsibilities and reporting processes for co-supervisors. Within a co-supervisory team, responsibilities should be established and agreed to as soon as practicable in the development of the HDR student's research proposal. Co-supervisors should maintain a level of communication with the HDR student and each other to allow adequate supervision whenever necessary;

6.10 commenting critically and constructively, and in reasonable time, on the content of drafts of the thesis. Monitor the HDR student's writing style to help avoid plagiarism and to ensure appropriate presentation of written material. Refer the HDR student to appropriate resources and assist with preparation of the research proposal;

6.11 providing academic support and guidance, and helping HDR students to create strategic academic networks by putting them in contact with relevant researchers and other HDR students in their discipline;

6.12 completing the bi-annual progress review and reporting requirements of the University and advising the HDR student on preparation for and performance in these reviews and reports;

6.13 monitoring the HDR student's performance and ensuring the HDR student is promptly made aware of inadequate progress or insufficient work by providing detailed feedback that identifies problems, establishing agreed timelines and milestones by which to measure performance, and conducting additional reviews of progress as required;

6.14 encouraging and supporting HDR students to publish and present their work where appropriate;

6.15 ensuring that HDR students receive appropriate recognition and credit for their research;

6.16 contributing to examination procedures by:

- certifying that the thesis is of a standard appropriate to the discipline, is properly presented and adequately expressed in English, conforms to University regulations and policies and is, therefore, prima facie, worthy of examination. The HDR student should be consulted on the choice of examiners but the final decision lies with the supervisor;
- advising the HDR student on how to deal constructively and appropriately with critical review, including examiners' comments and recommendations;
- recommending to the Dean, Research an appropriate response to the examiners' recommendations, including a proposed resolution of conflicting examiners' reports to the Examinations and HDR Academic Quality Panel, where necessary;
- reviewing amendments to the thesis and when required certify that the requisite amendments have been made within the required timeframe;

6.17 encouraging and supporting HDR students' career aspirations and planning and help them develop the personal and professional capabilities that will enhance their career options.

7. Responsibilities of HDR students

All HDR students are required to comply with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Australian Code), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (National Statement) and the [Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes](#) and adhere to high standards of research integrity and honesty at all times.

HDR students are required to demonstrate a professional attitude towards their research by:

- abiding by the [Policies, regulations and codes of good practice](#) and with other policies and procedures including UniSA's [intellectual property](#), data storage and management, [copyright and research misconduct](#), [authorship](#), University Activities policies;
- at commencement of candidature, establishing with supervisors the mutual expectations and obligations outlined in the [Welcome Checklist and Statement of Agreement](#), including supervision style, development of Research Degree Graduate Qualities and the use of PORTIA for project management;
- taking an active part in maintaining an appropriate schedule of meetings with the supervisors;
- undertaking training in research ethics, occupational health and safety, environmental protection, as well as technical matters appropriate to the discipline;
- completing a [research proposal](#) within six months (12 months part-time) of commencement in order to confirm their candidacy and continue their enrolment;
- prior to data collection, obtaining ethics and safety approvals for the research program as necessary and adopting ethical and safe working practices in all places of study and work and complying with occupational health, safety, welfare and injury management guidelines;
- submitting the necessary documentation (including Review of Progress documents confirming satisfactory progress against agreed milestones) to enable Graduate Studies Office to update their enrolment. Failure to comply may result in cancellation of enrolment;
- participating in the intellectual community provided by the Division/Institute/School/Centre and undertake appropriate Research Education Support Activities;
- playing an informed part in planning a research project in order to complete the thesis and degree within the allocated time of scholarship and/or funded candidature;
- maintaining the progress of work according to milestones agreed with supervisors;
- participating with supervisors and the research degree coordinator in planning and reviewing progress, and monitoring achievement of [Research Degree Graduate Qualities](#);
- disseminating and publishing their results on an ongoing basis during their candidacy;
- citing the work of other authors fully and accurately when disseminating research findings;
- complying with any confidentiality requirements of sponsors;

- taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties and share responsibility for seeking appropriate solutions;
- preparing the thesis for examination and submit with necessary documentation according to appropriate Guidelines and Regulations;
- participating in discussions relating to the appointment of examiners and, while not having a right to nominate or veto the choice, raising any concerns or objections about potential examiners;
- after examination, promptly making required corrections to the thesis within the allocated time and ensuring enrolment is active in the case of major amendments;
- regularly checking to ensure biographical, demographic and email details are up-to-date in myUniSA, checking email on a regular basis, conforming with University administrative requirements such as payment of all fees by the due dates and complying with enrolment dates;
- providing feedback to UniSA on the HDR student experience.

¹ See [Policy Res 15.1 Quality Assurance and Improvement in Higher Degrees by Research](#)