



Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Academic Progress procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) This Procedure is effective from 7 May 2019.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) To outline the requirements for academic progress for higher degree by research (HDR) students.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Procedure applies to students enrolled in Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) courses. It does not apply to degrees by coursework or higher doctoral degrees.

Section 4 - Policy

(4) This Procedure is pursuant to the [Higher Degrees by Research \(HDR\) policy](#).

Section 5 - Procedure

(5) Before their candidature can be confirmed, HDR students will satisfactorily complete:

- a. the HDR induction arranged by the Graduate Research Academy
- b. research integrity and, if required, human and animal ethics training
- c. the mandatory coursework unit/s required by their faculty or institute.
- d. Students will also receive information on research budget management and engage with the Individual Learning Plan, including the research plan.

(6) Before their candidature is confirmed, it is recommended that students complete:

- a. resilience and mental health awareness training
- b. training in project management techniques and time management.

(7) The mandatory coursework unit/s must be satisfactorily completed as soon as possible after commencement. The Faculty or Institute HDR Coordinator may extend this deadline after confirmation only for compassionate or compelling circumstances and confirmation is conditional until the unit is passed.

(8) Where a student achieves a mark of 40-49% for their mandatory coursework unit/s, the student will be referred to the Academic Unit HDR Coordinator to arrange further assessment. In this case:

- a. the student will be advised in writing that further assessment is their final opportunity to succeed and if they do not pass the unit/s, their candidature will not be confirmed
- b. further assessment must be completed within six weeks of the requirements being provided to the student
- c. the student will receive support from:
 - i. the Academic Unit HDR Coordinator to understand the reasons for failing, the implications of failure and to develop a plan for passing the unit
 - ii. the Unit Chair of the unit they failed
- d. if the unit is passed, the maximum mark that a student can receive is 50%.

Confirmation of candidature

(9) Students (except for those identified in Table 1: Academic progress requirements for specified masters degrees) will undertake a confirmation of candidature in accordance with a process approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development. Confirmation is required for students to continue in the course.

Table 1: Academic progress requirements for specified masters degrees

Degree	Requirements for confirmation	Transfer to doctoral degree permitted
Master of Science (Research) (pipelining)	Confirmation not required	No
Master of Philosophy (Electromaterials) - offered jointly with University of Wollongong	Confirmation required	No
Master of Philosophy - offered by the School of Medicine	Confirmation required	No
Master of Surgical Research	Confirmation required	No

(10) Confirmation of candidature for students completing an HDR on the basis of prior publications will be completed within 4 months of commencement or 8 months for part-time students.

(11) Doctoral students' confirmation of candidature will be completed within 12 months of commencement for full-time or 18 months for part-time candidature and masters students' confirmation of candidature will be completed within six months of commencement for full-time or 12 months part-time.

(12) The outcomes of confirmation of candidature are decided by the confirmation panel and may be that:

- a. candidature is confirmed
- b. candidature is confirmed conditional upon the student making minor amendments to the confirmation documents to the satisfaction of the panel chair within a set deadline
- c. candidature is not confirmed but the student is given an opportunity to revise their work and undertake a second confirmation process within three months equivalent full-time of the written notification of the outcome of the first confirmation process
- d. candidature is not confirmed.

(13) Students whose candidature is not confirmed at the first attempt are at risk of not making satisfactory progress and will be provided with appropriate support according to clauses 30-32.

(14) Confirmation of candidature can only be re-attempted once.

(15) Where candidature is not confirmed after a second attempt, the confirmation panel determines that the student

has made unsatisfactory academic progress and recommends to the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee to decide whether:

- a. a doctoral student be transferred to masters candidature; or
- b. the student's enrolment be terminated:
 - i. for a minimum of twelve months of being formally advised of the termination; or
 - ii. with no right of re-admission to the course.

(16) Failure by a student to undertake the confirmation process by the due date may indicate that the student is at risk of not making satisfactory progress.

(17) A student may request an extension to the confirmation due date of up three months equivalent full-time or up to six months where a masters student intends to apply to transfer to doctoral candidature. The request must be in writing, must have the support of the principal or executive supervisor and be approved by the Head of Academic Unit or nominee.

(18) Where a masters student's candidature is confirmed and the student later transfers to doctoral candidature, they must complete confirmation of candidature at doctoral level.

Extension of candidature

(19) Applications for extension of candidature will be made according to the processes stipulated by the Graduate Research Academy. An extension will be approved only when the student, supported by their principal or executive supervisor and Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee, provides evidence that they have already made substantial progress toward completion and have set out an achievable plan for completion within the requested extension period.

(20) An initial extension to candidature of no more than six months equivalent full-time may be approved. A further extension of up to six months equivalent full-time candidature may be approved in exceptional circumstances. No further extensions will be granted after this.

Transfer between research degrees

(21) Students can apply to transfer between research degrees before submission of their thesis according to the processes stipulated by the Graduate Research Academy, subject to the clauses below. The Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee will consider the application, including whether the student is making satisfactory academic progress, supervision is available and the project is suitable for the degree. The Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee will decide whether to approve the application.

(22) Where a student transfers between HDR courses, the time spent in the initial HDR course(s) is counted towards the maximum duration of the new HDR course.

(23) Masters students, except as specified in clause 24, may apply to transfer to a doctoral degree:

- a. at any time where they meet the requirements for admission specified in the [Higher Degrees by Research \(HDR\) Admission, Selection and Enrolment procedure](#) and the project is suitable; or
- b. where
 - i. they have been enrolled for one year equivalent full-time
 - ii. have demonstrated the ability to undertake research at doctoral level; and
 - iii. have prepared a substantial written report, which may be the document prepared for confirmation of

candidature.

(24) Students enrolled in a masters degree specified in Table 1: Academic progress requirements for specified masters degrees may not apply to transfer to a doctoral degree.

(25) Where a student applies to transfer from a masters degree to a doctoral degree and they are from a country listed under the autonomous sanctions requirements, a new risk assessment must be carried out using the appropriate form. The change must be approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development and, where required, the relevant Commonwealth Government department/s.

(26) Where a student applies to transfer from a masters to a doctoral degree, the transfer application may be considered at the same time as the confirmation of candidature.

Reviews of progress

(27) The principal or executive supervisor will monitor, assess and record the student's progress against their research plan at least every six months, including documenting any intervention strategies to support students at risk of not making satisfactory academic progress. The principal or executive supervisor will report any concerns about the student's progress to the Head of Academic Unit or nominee.

(28) The faculty/institute in which the student is enrolled will review the student's progress annually.

(29) For full-time students, the confirmation of candidature is the first annual progress review.

(30) The faculty/institute may require reviews of progress whenever they are concerned that the student is at risk of not making satisfactory progress.

Students who are at risk of not making satisfactory progress

(31) The faculty/institute will identify and assist students who are at risk of not making satisfactory progress including students who identify themselves as experiencing significant difficulties that may adversely affect their progress.

(32) When a student is at risk of not making satisfactory progress, the faculty/institute will:

- a. arrange team support and if necessary establish a Progress Support Panel and follow the guidelines approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development; or
- b. where a student has not completed their confirmation of candidature at the first attempt, the second confirmation process and outcomes will replace the progress support process and outcomes.

(33) The Progress Support Panel will decide the outcomes of the progress support process, which may include:

- a. resumption of normal candidature
- b. an extended period of reporting by the student and supervisor in addition to the normal annual review cycle
- c. a recommendation to the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee that the student's progress is unsatisfactory and that
 - i. a doctoral student be transferred to masters candidature, or
 - ii. the student's enrolment be terminated:
 - for a minimum of twelve months of being formally advised of the termination, after which the student may apply to be re-admitted; or
 - with no right of re-admission to the course.

Termination of enrolment or transfer from doctoral to masters candidature

(34) The Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee may:

- a. endorse the recommendation made in accordance with clause 15 or 35c) and decide that it should be implemented (the 'proposed decision'); or
- b. not endorse the recommendation, in which case the matter is referred back to the Progress Support Panel or second confirmation panel for further consideration.

(35) Within 10 working days of receiving the Progress Support Panel or second confirmation panel report, the Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee must notify the student in writing of:

- a. the faculty/institute's proposed decision under clause 33
- b. the student's right to have the proposed decision reviewed
- c. the requirement for the student to respond in writing to the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee to accept or not accept the proposed decision
- d. the process for having the proposed decision reviewed where the student does not accept it, and
- e. appropriate support services available to the student.

(36) Within 10 working days of the date of notification of the proposed decision, the student must respond in writing to the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee to either:

- a. accept the proposed decision, or
- b. indicate that they do not accept the proposed decision and would like it to be reviewed. They must provide a written submission with the reasons and documentary evidence in English to show why it should not be implemented.

(37) Any student who uses the HDR review process to make a frivolous or vexatious submission or who lies or deliberately misleads in relation to a submission may be subject to disciplinary proceedings according to [Regulation 4.1\(1\) - General Misconduct](#).

(38) From the date that the student receives the notification of the proposed decision until the decision is made the student will not pursue their research or receive supervision. The student will remain enrolled and maintain access to University support services and email.

(39) Where the student notifies the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee that they accept the proposed decision, the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee confirms the decision in writing to the student and the Graduate Research Academy, and it is implemented by the Graduate Research Academy as soon as practicable.

(40) Where the student does not respond within 10 working days specified in clause 35, they will be deemed to have accepted the proposed decision. The Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee will confirm the decision in writing to the student and it will be implemented by the Graduate Research Academy as soon as practicable.

Late review submissions

(41) A student may apply in writing to the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee to provide a late review submission on the grounds that exceptional circumstances outside the student's control have prevented the student from applying within the normal timeframe. Failure to thoroughly check email is not an exceptional circumstance. Deakin International will be consulted when international students ask to

submit late applications.

(42) The Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development will decide that there were:

- a. exceptional circumstances, in which case the faculty will review the student's application in accordance with this procedure or
- b. no exceptional circumstances, in which case the student and, where relevant, Deakin International, is informed in writing within five working days of the faculty's decision and the reasons for that decision.

The decision is not appealable.

Review proceedings

(43) Within 15 working days of receiving a student's written notification that they do not accept the proposed decision, an HDR Academic Progress Committee will meet to consider the student's review case.

(44) The HDR Academic Progress Committee will consist of:

- a. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or nominee who will be the Chair.
- b. An academic member of the Research and Research Training Committee, not from the faculty or Academic Unit of the student.
- c. An HDR Coordinator, not from the faculty or Academic Unit of the student.

The Chair will nominate the other members of the committee.

(45) Where it could be perceived that there is a conflict of interest for the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development, the Chair, Research and Research Training Committee will nominate an alternative Chair of the HDR Academic Progress Committee.

(46) All staff involved in an HDR Academic Progress Committee hearing shall comply with and are bound by the provisions of legislation including the [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#), the [Health Records Act 2001 \(Vic\)](#) and must also comply with the University's [Code of Conduct](#), and policies and procedures including the [Diversity and Inclusion policy](#) and [Conflict of Interest procedure](#).

(47) The Secretary of the HDR Academic Progress Committee will notify the student and the relevant Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee of the date, time and place of the hearing at least ten working days prior to the meeting date.

(48) The faculty/institute will be provided with the student's review submission and may respond in writing to the points made in the submission. This response must be received by the Secretary of the HDR Academic Progress Committee at least seven working days prior to the hearing date and will be provided to the student according to the process in clause 51.

(49) The student has the right to attend the review hearing and address the Committee. The student must notify the Secretary of the HDR Academic Progress Committee at least seven working days prior to the hearing date if they wish to attend the hearing.

(50) At least five working days prior to the hearing date, the Secretary of the HDR Academic Progress Committee must provide the student, the faculty/institute and the HDR Academic Progress Committee members with copies of relevant documents for consideration. At this time, the Secretary must also notify the Committee members, the student and the faculty/institute of the final membership of the HDR Academic Progress Committee to hear and determine the matter.

(51) At the review hearing:

- a. The HDR Academic Progress Committee has the authority to take written submissions or hear from any persons it deems appropriate.
- b. The HDR Academic Progress Committee first considers the student's written submission, relevant faculty/institute documentation and any other relevant information and evidence.
- c. If the student attends the hearing, they may be accompanied by a person of their choice, who is not a practising lawyer.
- d. The student and their support person are then invited into the hearing and the student is given the opportunity to explain and provide reasons why the faculty/institute's proposed decision should not be made.
- e. The members of the HDR Academic Progress Committee may question the student. Where the support person has expertise likely to assist the Committee on procedural, technical or factual matters or if the student requires reasonable adjustments, the Committee will allow the support person to speak on the student's behalf if the need arises.
- f. The HDR Academic Progress Committee will request a nominee(s) from the faculty/institute to address the Committee. The student will be given the opportunity to be present during this time. Members of the Committee, the student and the nominee may question each other.
- g. The HDR Academic Progress Committee may adjourn a hearing at any time but, wherever possible, the same Committee must continue to hear and consider the case at a later time. If it is not possible for the Committee to reconvene in person, the matter will be determined by circulation.
- h. The HDR Academic Progress Committee is not bound to make a decision at the time of a hearing and may take any additional reasonable time it requires to consider its decision, but should take no longer than 10 working days.
- i. All proceedings of the HDR Academic Progress Committee are confidential.

Review decision

(52) A decision of the HDR Academic Progress Committee is reached in private, by simple majority with the Chair having the casting vote. The HDR Academic Progress Committee may decide to:

- a. confirm and implement the proposed decision, or
- b. vary the proposed decision, and it may determine certain conditions which must be met by the student and/or faculty/institute, or
- c. withdraw the proposed decision.

(53) The HDR Academic Progress Committee must notify the student, faculty/institute, the Graduate Research Academy and, in the case of international students, Deakin International, in writing within five working days of:

- a. the decision and reasons for decision, and
- b. the right of appeal to the University Appeals Committee within 20 working days of the date on which the notice of the decision could reasonably have been received.

(54) If the HDR Academic Progress Committee has determined to withdraw the proposed decision, the student will be permitted to remain in candidature and resume their research. Time elapsed during the process of the review will be added to the length of candidature.

(55) Where candidature is to continue, the faculty/institute is expected to make suitable arrangements to support the student's research. The relevant Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development or their nominee will advise the Chair of the HDR Academic Progress Committee of the proposed arrangements to support the student, including:

- a. supervision arrangements

- b. processes established to improve the student's academic progress or to assist the student to comply with the regulations relevant to the student's work for the degree
- c. processes established to monitor the student's ongoing progress.

(56) The HDR Academic Progress Committee's decision, together with the reasons for it, is reported in confidence to the Research and Research Training Committee.

Appeals

(57) A student may appeal a decision of the HDR Academic Progress Committee to the University Appeals Committee. A student can appeal on the following grounds:

- a. there was a misapplication of procedures resulting in some disadvantage to the student
- b. there is new mitigating evidence which the student was not reasonably able to present at the review stage, which, had it been available, may have affected the decision.

(58) The completed application for appeal must be lodged in writing within 20 working days of being notified of the outcome of the hearing as required by the [Student Appeals procedure](#).

Records and reporting

(59) A written record of the Progress Support Panel report and recommendation, and the decision of the HDR Academic Progress Committee will be stored confidentially on relevant faculty/institute records and central records held by the Graduate Research Academy. In the case of the University Appeals Committee, a report is also provided to the Academic Board.

(60) All reporting must be anonymous and confidential.

(61) All documentation associated with proceedings, except the documentation provided to the above areas, shall be collected by the Secretary at the end of a hearing and disposed of securely.

Section 6 - Definitions

(62) For the purpose of this Procedure:

- a. Academic Unit: as defined in the [Research Conduct policy](#).
- b. confirmation of candidature: confirmation of candidature is a process of evaluation and feedback on an HDR student's progress, research question and project plan, as described in this procedure.
- c. equivalent full-time: elapsed time where a student studies full-time, excluding approved intermission and including annual leave. For those enrolled part-time, equivalent full-time is twice as long as for full-time students.
- d. Head of Academic Unit nominee: a senior member of Academic staff who is qualified as a principal supervisor and who has been nominated by the Head of Academic Unit.
- e. higher degrees by research (HDR): as defined in the [Higher Degrees by Research \(HDR\) policy](#).
- f. Progress Support Panel: a panel established by a faculty or institute to support students who have been identified as at risk of not making satisfactory progress in their research studies and who are at risk of not completing their degree within the prescribed time limit.
- g. research plan: a plan for the student's candidature detailing progress milestones and key research events developed early in candidature and reviewed at least annually.
- h. satisfactory academic progress: where a student continues to satisfactorily complete required progress

milestones and key research events for their candidature by the deadlines outlined in the research plan and it is expected that they will submit their thesis for examination by the allowed course duration. Milestones include satisfactory completion of confirmation of candidature and supervisor, Academic Unit or faculty/institute reviews.

- i. unsatisfactory academic progress: where a student does not meet the requirements of satisfactory academic progress after a second confirmation or progress support panel process.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	7th May 2019
Review Date	7th May 2024
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	6th May 2019
Expiry Date	To Be Advised
Responsible Executive	Julie Owens Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research +61 3 522 73486
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