

Coursework Professional Doctorates Guidelines

Section 1 - General

(1) These guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the [Professional Doctorates Policy](#) and provide detail not specifically covered in the Rules. Colleges should use the Rules and guidelines when developing program proposals, to ensure that new programs comply with the University's requirements.

(2) As well as being a guide for Colleges the guidelines are also intended to be a useful resource for coursework professional doctorate candidates and for their instructors and supervisors.

Section 2 - Candidate Progress

(3) The University's policy on Review of Progress applies to the coursework component of professional doctorates.

(4) Before embarking on the research component of the program, candidates should be made aware of any early exit options, where such options exist (Clause 28 of the [Professional Doctorates Policy](#) refers). Where the structure of the program is such that the final stage is a major research project, the candidate should not normally commence that research project until they have successfully completed all coursework units in the program. All coursework components should normally be completed before submission of the final research component.

(5) It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to monitor the progress of a candidate during the research component of the program against a structured completion plan which must be developed at the commencement of the research component by the candidate in consultation with the supervisor, and to ensure that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected is brought to the candidate's attention. Regular contact between the candidate and supervisor should facilitate the early identification of problems and the provision of timely academic counselling.

(6) Formal progress reports are to be submitted around the mid-point of any of the candidate's research components of 40 units duration or greater. Specific professional doctorate progress report forms have been developed for this purpose, and will be provided to the program convenor for distribution to candidates as required. The candidate should complete their section of the progress report and then submit it to their supervisor. When the supervisor completes their section the form should then be forwarded to the program convenor.

(7) If the candidate wishes to use the form to raise problems about their program, they may submit the form directly to the program convenor without giving it to their supervisor. In cases where the program convenor is the candidate's supervisor, the form can be submitted directly to the Head of School.

(8) The program convenor must report to the Research Training Sub-Committee all cases of unsatisfactory progress, and the steps to be undertaken to redress the progress to ensure completion within the specified time requirements. The details of all candidates required to enrol beyond the normal period of candidature must be reported to the Research Training Sub-Committee.

Section 3 - Supervision of the Research Component(s) of Professional Doctorates

Appointment of Supervisor

(9) Each coursework professional doctorate candidate will have a principal supervisor appointed for the research component of their program. The College may also appoint a co-supervisor if desired. If the candidate is enrolled on an external basis the College may appoint, in addition to the principal supervisor, a suitably qualified person who is resident at, or near the place of study, to provide advice and support to the candidate.

(10) The College must ensure that the principal supervisor is suitably qualified to supervise the candidate and has a satisfactory record of postgraduate supervision. Supervisors of coursework professional doctorate candidates will hold a PhD or DBA or equivalent. In special cases a supervisor without a doctorate may be appointed where they have an equivalent combination of academic qualifications and professional and research attainments. The College will ensure that at least one of the supervisors is a continuing member of staff or a staff member on a contract which is long enough to cover the period of the research component of any candidate they may be supervising.

(11) A person is only to be appointed as a principal supervisor if they can reasonably be expected to be able to provide supervision for the duration of the research project.

(12) The College must make provision in the appointment of supervisors for access to the supervisor should corrections need to be made to the thesis following the determination of the examination outcome by the Research Training Sub-Committee.

(13) The principal supervisor must have relevant knowledge, expertise and interest in the candidate's research area.

(14) Depending on the structure of the program it may be appropriate for applicants to indicate on their application for enrolment the general area in which they intend to carry out the research, so that the College can determine, before accepting the candidate, whether suitable supervision will be available. If no suitable supervisor can be found for a proposed topic, either the applicant should be asked to select another topic if appropriate, or the application should be rejected. No candidate should be allowed to commence the research component of their program unless a suitable supervisor has been found.

(15) A supervisor will not normally be responsible for more than five full-time equivalent research candidates, including professional doctorate candidates, at any one time. Where it is proposed that a supervisor undertake supervision in excess of this number, the program convenor must satisfy the relevant Head of School and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) that the additional supervisory load will still allow the supervisor to discharge satisfactorily the responsibilities set out in the section headed "Responsibilities of Supervisors" below. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) must be satisfied that the workload of the supervisor is such as to allow sufficient time for the adequate supervision of all candidates he or she is supervising.

Responsibilities of Supervisors of the Research Component of a Professional Doctorate

(16) The responsibilities of supervisors are set out in section C "Responsibilities of Supervisors" of the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature.

Section 4 - Obtaining Ethics Approval for

the Research Component of a Coursework Professional Doctorate

(17) It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor of the research component of a coursework professional doctorate to advise the candidate of appropriate ethical practices and where required, supervise and endorse an application for clearance to the University and any other appropriate ethics committee and to ensure that the research is conducted in accordance with the terms of the approval of the ethics committee(s). Ideally, the University's ethics clearance procedures should be detailed in any research methods course taught prior to the commencement of the research project.

(18) The person nominated as principal supervisor of a coursework professional doctorate candidate who will need ethics clearance for their project should ascertain the deadlines for the meetings of the relevant ethics committee(s) and ensure that applications for approval are lodged in good time for approval to be obtained prior to the intended commencement date of the research component of the candidate's program.

(19) For any research involving human participants, human tissue, records or information which identifies individuals and which is not in the public domain (eg health, students, employment records, restricted electoral rolls, private documents) or human research data in an unpublished form, human ethics approval must be obtained before the research can commence. This is a Commonwealth Government requirement. Candidates undertaking the research component of a coursework professional doctorate program apply for human ethics approval to the relevant College's Research Ethics Committee.

(20) A coursework professional doctorate candidate will need approval from the University's Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC) if they propose to undertake a research project in which animals are used. An animal is defined as any vertebrate (other than a human being) and includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.

(21) ACEC approval is obtained by the candidate's principal supervisor on behalf of the candidate. The principal supervisor will appear as the Chief Investigator on the application form. The Chief Investigator must be a member of staff of the University, Hunter Area Health Service, Avondale College, Wildthing Environmental Consultants or other Accredited Research Establishments for which the University of Newcastle ACEC acts as the nominated ACEC.

Section 5 - The Submission and Examination of Research Theses

(22) Detailed thesis examination procedures have been developed by Graduate Research, and will be made available to professional doctorate Program Convenors. The procedures are aligned with the procedure for the examination of higher degree by research theses. In general terms the following procedures will apply.

Submission of Thesis

(23) Professional Doctorate Thesis Preparation and Submission provides the detail of the timing and format of the thesis submission.

(24) The principal supervisor of a professional doctorate thesis is required to submit a certificate concerning the acceptability of the thesis for examination. This certificate is to accompany the thesis when it is submitted. If the supervisor is not willing to certify that the thesis is acceptable for examination, the Head of School will determine whether or not to send the thesis for examination.

Appointment of Examiners

(25) The candidate's supervisor will nominate two recommended examiners and one reserve examiner for endorsement by the Head of School and approval by the Dean of Graduate Research. While the Rules allow for one of the examiners to be internal, in the interests of the University's international reputation, it is preferable for both examiners to be external to the University. The reserve examiner must be external to the University.

(26) In the interests of transparency of process and upholding the University's reputation, the Research Training Sub-Committee has determined that candidates of the same supervisor shall not have more than one examiner in common. That is to say, where two examiners are nominated for candidate A, then only one of these can be nominated for candidate B.

Examination Outcome

(27) Examination reports will be considered by the Research Training Sub-Committee.

(28) Graduate Research will notify the candidate, Head of School and supervisor of the outcome. The Research Training Sub-Committee will monitor corrections to the thesis and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) will be advised of a final result (pass/fail).

Section 6 - Grievances Relating to Professional Doctorate Studies

(29) The University has established a [student grievance procedure](#) which outlines both the formal and informal means through which issues of concern may be resolved. All higher degree by research candidates should be provided with a copy of the procedure at the commencement of their studies. The program convenor should be familiar with the procedure and should ensure that all staff teaching in the program or supervising the research component of candidates in the program are also made aware of the procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	8th December 2011
Review Date	31st December 2019
Approval Authority	Academic Senate
Approval Date	8th December 2011
Expiry Date	9th October 2023
Responsible Executive	Kylie Shaw Dean of Graduate Research
Enquiries Contact	Lisa Williams Senior Manager Operations

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Applicant" - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Candidature" - The period of time between acceptance of offer and termination, withdrawal from, or completion of a higher degree by research program, including periods when a candidate is not enrolled.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"PhD" - Is a Doctor of Philosophy degree, referred to as a Doctoral Degree (Research) by the Australian Qualifications Framework.

"Postgraduate" - Any qualification being at the level of Graduate Certificate or above.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Program Convenor" - The academic staff member with overall responsibility for the management and quality of a program.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.