

Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature

Section 1 - Introduction

Summary

(1) This Code describes the responsibilities of higher degree by research (HDR) candidates, their supervisors, respective Colleges/Academic units and the University of Newcastle (the University) relating to HDR candidature, and forms the basis of understanding and commitment between all parties. This document is guided by the Australian Council of Graduate Research's [Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles](#) and supports the University's [Rules Governing Higher Degrees by Research](#).

Audience

(2) This Code applies to all HDR candidates, their supervisors, including external supervisors, and respective College/Academic unit.

(3) Colleges/Academic units may issue additional documentation to HDR candidates at College induction/orientation sessions. For the purpose of this Code, an academic unit may encompass a school, a discipline or a centre, depending on the organisational structure of the College.

Purpose

(4) The purpose of this Code is to provide a foundation for successful candidature by outlining the minimum responsibilities of all parties to ensure mutual understanding, and should be referenced throughout the lifecycle of a candidate's program.

Section 2 - Candidate Responsibilities

(5) Undertaking a HDR program requires dedication and accountability. In accepting an offer of admission, a candidate agrees to comply with the rules, policies and procedures of the University, including maintaining the standards of professional behaviour with all University staff and fellow candidates as described in the University's [Student Conduct Rule](#) and [Code of Conduct](#). The student-supervisor relationship is a critical relationship in ensuring successful and timely completion. The relationship is first and foremost a professional, not a personal relationship.

Commencement

(6) Be an active participant in the selection and appointment of the supervisory team.

(7) Instigate initial discussions with the supervisory team using the [HDR Supervisory Expectations](#) form as a guide.

Supervision

(8) Promptly advise a member of the supervisory team of any significant factors that may affect progress, and initiate

any variations to candidature as required.

(9) Be aware of the College/Academic unit mechanisms that exist for resolving supervisor-candidate difficulties and access assistance when necessary. Candidates may seek a change of supervisor in some circumstances. Please see [Graduate Research - Progressing Students](#).

(10) Inform the supervisory team of any supervisor changes instigated by the candidate.

Training and induction

(11) Complete any required University induction programs, as well as any additional orientation or training sessions required by the College/Academic unit.

(12) Be aware of additional training opportunities offered by the University or the College/Academic unit.

Resources

(13) Utilise the resources, facilities and opportunities available to ensure progress, and where additional resources or facilities are required, discuss these requirements with the supervisory team. Details of resources are provided in the [Guidelines for Resourcing Higher Degree by Research Candidates](#).

Culture

(14) Actively engage with the research community in the College/Academic unit.

Progress and reporting

(15) Maintain continuous enrolment and regular attendance patterns, or seek approval for leave of absence if necessary (See: [Re-Enrolment guide for Research Higher Degree Candidates](#)). Candidates are to apply themselves diligently to their research, make every effort to achieve satisfactory academic progress with their research project, and aim to complete the program within the specified timeframe.

(16) Determine a regular schedule of meetings with the supervisory team and adhere to this schedule. These arrangements may need to be re-negotiated as candidature progresses. In the case of off-campus enrolments, candidates should endeavour to meet in person with their supervisor(s) at least annually, and ensure that appropriate facilities are utilised for the purposes of more regular meetings.

(17) In consultation with the supervisory team, develop and maintain the research plan and detailed timeline, with milestones, for completion of the research project and thesis write-up.

(18) Document the progress of work and present written or other material to the supervisory team for comment, feedback and discussion in a timely manner to allow for continuity of the research program.

(19) Take the initiative in raising problems, difficulties or delays relating to candidature and seek to resolve such matters as expeditiously as possible.

(20) Satisfy all confirmation and progression requirements, and submit all confirmation reports, progress reports (see [Graduate Research - Progressing Students](#)) and other reports as required.

(21) Regularly access NUmial as a means of maintaining communication with the University. Official communication from the University, including from Graduate Research, will be sent to the candidate's NUmial account.

Research Integrity and Safety

(22) Adhere to ethical practices in research appropriate to the particular discipline and relevant profession, including

those required by:

- a. [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#);
- b. the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#);
- c. Any practices specified by the University's [Human Research Ethics Committee](#) and [Animal Care and Ethics Committee](#); or
- d. Any ethical guidelines that may be set down by a relevant government or funding body.

(23) Seek advice from supervisors and other relevant experts on any application for ethics approval.

(24) Maintain safe working practices relevant to the field of research, and adhere to relevant documents within the University [Health and Safety Management System](#).

(25) Ensure that agreement is reached regarding who will have access to research data (raw and processed data) and at what stage of the research process. All raw and processed data must be recorded in a retrievable, durable and appropriately referenced form, and made available to supervisors at any time during candidature. Ensure that all original data are managed in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#), and retained and disposed of in accordance with the University's [Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure](#).

(26) Ensure that agreement is reached with supervisors and other research collaborators concerning authorship of publications and other research outputs, and acknowledgment of relative contributions during and after candidature. Any publications arising from a candidate's thesis research must include the candidate's name. It should not be automatically assumed that the supervisors' names will appear on all such published work, however, it should be acknowledged that supervisors and the University make a major contribution to the candidate's progress.

(27) Note: the minimum requirement for authorship should be in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), and the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#) and [Research Authorship Procedure](#).

Completion

(28) Prepare the thesis for examination in the format prescribed in the [Thesis Examination Guidelines](#), including making the required thesis declarations.

(29) Prepare the thesis in accordance with the principles of research integrity as stipulated in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) including authorship, plagiarism and research ethics, and ensure that any editorial assistance in the writing of the thesis is appropriately acknowledged.

(30) After examination, make any required amendments to the thesis within the specified timeframe.

(31) As required, ensure to acknowledge any scholarship contributions made to candidature.

Section 3 - Supervisor Responsibilities

(32) All HDR candidates must have a minimum of two supervisors. The responsibilities listed are shared between the principal supervisor and the co-supervisor(s), with the principal supervisor normally being the primary contact person and having responsibility for the requirements of candidature including progress reporting.

(33) Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the role model they demonstrate to candidates encourages a research culture of excellence, integrity, professionalism and mutual respect.

(34) The student-supervisor relationship is a critical relationship in ensuring successful and timely completion. The relationship is first and foremost a professional, not a personal relationship.

Commencement

(35) Provide initial guidance to the candidate about the nature of research and the standard of performance expected, including:

- a. the choice of research topic;
- b. planning of the research program;
- c. presentation of a research proposal;
- d. appropriate literature and sources; and;
- e. research methodologies and requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction and attendance at taught classes where necessary e.g. computer analysis, statistics).

(36) Undertake early assessment of the candidate's work, provide formative of feedback on academic progress, and identify needs for additional support.

Supervision

(37) Notify the Head of School of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest between the members of the supervisory team and/or the candidate. In cases of conflict, mitigation strategies must be put in place, for example where two supervisors are a couple, an additional supervisor must be appointed. Such conflicts include, but are not limited to:

- a. supervisors being related to one another;
- b. supervisors being in a close personal relationship;
- c. candidate being related to one of the supervisors;
- d. candidate being in a close personal relationship with a supervisor; or
- e. principal supervisor being candidate's work supervisor (e.g. Head of School if the candidate is a staff member).

Note: A supervisor who is also a work supervisor for casual appointments does not constitute a conflict of interest under this section.

(38) Be mindful of the particular requirements of each candidate, and ensure appropriate and productive use of the candidate's time, especially in the first year of candidature.

(39) Encourage the candidate to show initiative and self-motivation so that the candidate will be able to pursue independent research with confidence, particularly in the final stages of candidature.

(40) Strongly encourage, wherever appropriate, the publication of the results of the candidate's research.

(41) Assist candidates in developing the necessary skills for peer review, and to understand their obligation to participate in peer reviews.

(42) Ensure that where a change in research direction occurs, appropriate supervisory adjustments are negotiated and that, subject to approval, adjustments are made to the period of candidature.

(43) Advise the candidate of any expected absence and the alternative arrangements to be implemented for supervision during that absence.

(44) Advise the candidate of any changing circumstances in relation to supervisory availability, including withdrawal of supervision.

Training and induction

(45) Undertake supervisor accreditation or training as required.

(46) Keep up to date with changes to supervisory practice and procedures.

(47) Oversee and support the development of candidates' discipline specific research skills, general academic skills and career planning.

Resources

(48) Maintain an up-to-date research profile in the University's relevant system.

Culture

(49) Encourage the candidate to play a full and active role in the intellectual life of the College/Academic unit. This is particularly important in the case of part-time candidates and candidates whose major work is being conducted away from the University Academic unit or in a joint project with a commercial or industry partner.

(50) Arrange meetings for the candidate with other Researchers, industry and community groups in the relevant field, and attendance at conferences, as appropriate (within the limits of resources available to the Academic unit).

(51) Arrange for an annual presentation (or more frequently if appropriate) by candidates of their research work to College/Academic unit forums.

Progress and reporting

(52) Establish and maintain a schedule of regular (ordinarily at least monthly) contact with the candidate in accordance with College policy and balanced in terms of the needs of the project and the candidate. Off-campus candidates should use appropriate technology for the purposes of the regular meetings, with face-to-face meetings held at least annually.

(53) Provide guidance to candidates in preparing for a timely and successful confirmation.

(54) Contribute to all progress reviews of a candidate, as required. All supervisors, including those external to the University, must be consulted by the principal supervisor and their feedback included in the supervisory comments on the progress report form.

(55) Ensure that the candidate provides regular written work, interim reports or research results as appropriate and to return such work, including draft thesis writing, with appropriate feedback and criticism, ordinarily within one month of receipt.

(56) Ensure that the candidate is made aware of inadequate progress by specifying the problems and suggesting ways of addressing them.

(57) Ensure that unsatisfactory progress or delays are reported and addressed promptly and appropriately (e.g. by applying intervention strategies, seeking additional assistance from the Head of School or Graduate Research as needed).

(58) Be satisfied that the research methods and outcomes of the candidate are appropriate and valid, and to report any concerns to the appropriate authority.

(59) Work with the candidate to develop a detailed timeline, including milestones, and provide detailed advice on necessary completion dates of successive stages of work so that the thesis may be submitted within the scheduled

time.

Research integrity and safety

(60) Ensure that the candidate is adequately trained in safe working practices relevant to the particular field of research, and adheres to relevant documents within the University [Health and Safety Management System](#).

(61) Ensure that the candidate is aware of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#) and, in particular, of the need to follow ethical practices appropriate to the particular discipline and profession.

(62) Advise the candidate of appropriate ethical practices and where required, scrutinise and endorse an application that meets the requirements of the University and any other appropriate ethics committee, ensuring that approval is obtained before the research commences, and that the research is conducted in accordance with the terms of approval from the ethics committee(s).

(63) Ensure adherence to the University [Intellectual Property Policy](#) and its associated documents.

(64) Ensure that the candidate records original data in a retrievable, durable and appropriately referenced form and stored safely for a period appropriate to the discipline, in accordance with the University's [Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure](#) and Academic unit policy, and where appropriate will include the lodging of datasets with national data archives.

(65) Ensure that agreement is reached with the candidate concerning authorship of publications and other research outputs, and acknowledgment of relative contributions during and after candidature. Any publications arising from a candidate's thesis research must include the candidate's name. It should not be automatically assumed that the supervisors' names will appear on all such published work, however, it should be acknowledged that supervisors and the University make a major contribution to the candidate's progress.

(66) Note: the minimum requirement for authorship should be in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), and the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#) and [Research Authorship Guidelines](#).

Completion

(67) Advise the Head of Academic unit of the names of possible appropriately qualified examiners. The candidate may advise the supervisor and the Head of the Academic unit of names of persons who may be appropriate or otherwise. Examiner nominations must be received by Graduate Research by the time the research thesis is submitted. The names of the chosen examiners are not to be disclosed to the candidate, unless candidates are completing an oral examination as part of their examination process.

(68) Ensure the thesis adheres to the principles of research integrity as stipulated in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) including authorship, plagiarism and research ethics, and that any editorial assistance in the writing of the thesis is appropriately acknowledged.

Section 4 - College / Academic Unit Responsibilities

(69) The College/Academic unit will provide candidates and supervisors with the appropriate support, facilities and academic culture to thrive in their research.

Commencement

(70) Operate selection and admission procedures which, at a minimum, ensures that:

- a. the applicant has the requisite academic background for admission;
- b. the applicant appears to have the capacity required to undertake the program successfully and in a reasonable time;
- c. the research project proposed is appropriate in level and scope for the degree;
- d. the project is feasible in terms of facilities, including expert supervision, equipment, resources, source materials and funding for the expected duration of the research required for the HDR candidature;
- e. due recognition is given to the research interests and ability of the applicant and that consultation occurs in determining the project; and
- f. information is available to prospective candidates about the research interests and academic experience of all staff in the Academic unit, and where appropriate, a list of available research areas likely to support a research candidate.

Supervision

(71) Ensure that appropriate supervision is available to the candidate at all times and that:

- a. no perceived or actual conflict of interest exists, as detailed in Clause 37;
- b. where a perceived or actual conflict of interest exists, a third supervisor must be nominated and take responsibility for a minimum of 20 per cent of the supervisory load;
- c. each candidate has a minimum of two supervisors; a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor (additional supervisors can be included if needed to ensure adequate overall supervision for the candidate), subject to a Head of School recommendation and approved by the Dean of Graduate Research;
- d. the principal supervisor has appropriate expertise and interest in the area of research, and has sufficient experience and capacity in supervision to offer the candidate adequate supervision;
- e. the minimum contribution from any supervisor should be 20 per cent with the principal supervisor having the highest (or equal highest) percentage contribution. A special case must be made to the Dean of Graduate Research for a lower level contribution (for instance in the cases of industry supervisors or specialist technical supervisors, or where a cohort model is being used);
- f. if the principal supervisor has not previously supervised a HDR candidate through to successful completion, there must be an experienced co-supervisor who has supervised to completion and who has at least a 35 per cent supervisory load;
- g. the principal supervisor must be a University staff member or conjoint;
- h. the principal supervisor is not themselves a HDR candidate, unless approved by the Dean of Graduate Research;
- i. at least one supervisor must have appointment for the duration of the candidate's program, unless approved by the Dean of Graduate Research;
- j. either the principal or a co-supervisor have attained a HDR at a level equivalent to or higher than the level of the degree being supervised, or has a combination of qualifications and research attainments at least equivalent to that level;
- k. the supervisory role and contribution of each supervisor is specified at admission, however can be amended throughout candidature, whilst remaining consistent with the requirement specified above. Any changes to supervisory teams, including load changes, must be notified to Graduate Research;
- l. the workload of supervisors is such as to allow sufficient time for the adequate supervision of the candidate, and the allocation of supervisors has taken into consideration any Honours students being supervised, as well as teaching load and other obligations; and
- m. if the principal supervisor is to be temporarily absent in excess of a period of four weeks, alternative supervisory arrangements are made and the candidate and Graduate Research are notified.

Training and induction

(72) Provide orientation programs for candidates and their supervisors, to clarify procedures, give advice and discuss the expectations of candidates and staff (e.g. with regard to the timing and presentation of progress reports, access to facilities and resources, and guidelines on appeals procedures at College/Academic unit level).

(73) Distribute information to all HDR candidates on facilities and resources available, including, but not limited to:

- a. research ethics and conduct;
- b. library support;
- c. information services;
- d. access to research and conference funding
- e. IT infrastructure; and
- f. guidelines on matters relating to authorship of publications, ownership of intellectual property, exploitation of inventions, retention of data, and the procedures for monitoring adherence to them.

(74) Ensure that training workshops in ethical issues and procedures, health and safety procedures, environmental protection and any technical matters relevant to the discipline are delivered.

Resources

(75) Ensure that candidates are only admitted where there are suitable physical facilities and research resources appropriate to the field of study.

(76) Ensure the minimum level of resources required to complete a high quality research project is provided to each on-campus HDR candidate, as per the [Guidelines for Resourcing Higher Degree by Research Candidates](#) (acknowledging part-time candidates' access to physical resources may need to be on a shared basis).

(77) Ensure that for off-campus candidates, the level of resources to be provided is agreed between the candidate and the College and documented at the time of enrolment, or upon approval of off-campus enrolment.

(78) Ensure that candidates have opportunity to provide feedback to the appropriate person within their Academic unit regarding any issues around the provision of resources.

(79) Provide clear information to candidates on the facilities and resources available within the Academic unit and within the University (e.g. library, computing and technical facilities, software and computer training, statistical advice, or English language tuition).

Culture

(80) Ensure mechanisms are in place to promote regular consultation, interaction and development of productive intellectual relationships between HDR candidates and other Researchers, both within the University and globally, including, but not limited to:

- a. the election of a HDR candidate as a representative to an appropriate representative body of the Academic unit;
- b. seminars on research procedures relevant to postgraduate-level research;
- c. a regular program of seminars delivered by research candidates in the Academic unit's research areas;
- d. seminars and courses to provide information and skills development, and;
- e. guidance on matters relating to authorship of publications, ownership of intellectual property, exploitation of inventions, and retention of data.

(81) Ensure that, where by prior arrangement a candidate is conducting the majority of their research away from the University, steps are taken to ensure the candidate is given the opportunity to have as active a role as circumstances permit in the intellectual life of the Academic unit.

Progress and reporting

(82) Appoint an academic staff member to monitor the general progress and welfare of HDR candidates, ensuring that Graduate Research are notified of the appointment. It is recommended that the Head of the Academic unit not be appointed to this role, in order to provide candidates with an alternative pathway for consultation.

(83) Clearly communicate College/Academic unit policy on the timing and mode of presentation of reports by which a candidate's progress is assessed.

(84) Ensure that confirmation committees are established to assess the performance of the candidate within twelve months of the commencement of candidature (on a full-time basis, or part-time equivalent).

(85) Ensure that clear milestones are set and reviewed for the duration of candidature, by consultation between the candidate and the supervisory team, to ensure completion of the thesis within the prescribed time requirements.

(86) Ensure supervisory teams report on the progress of their candidates as required.

(87) Ensure the candidate's research project is not unduly influenced or redirected by political, commercial or industrial factors.

Research integrity and safety

(88) Ensure candidates receive adequate supervision of research projects, and that all research conducted complies with ethical, health and safety, environmental protection, and other required protocols. Where appropriate, responsibility for providing supervision of a candidate's research projects can be delegated to someone not on the supervisory team, subject to their express written agreement.

Completion

(89) Ensure that each thesis examination is conducted by at least two experts of international standing in the discipline. Experts must be external to the University, independent of the conduct of the research, and without any real or perceived conflict of interest in reaching their decision.

Section 5 - Institutional Responsibilities

(90) The University will ensure that policies relating to HDR candidature are developed, implemented and monitored.

Commencement

(91) Ensure adequate and accurate University wide information is provided to candidates and their supervisors prior to enrolment.

(92) Ensure that the policies and procedures for the allocation of scholarships are widely available and include clearly defined eligibility and selection criteria, as well as information regarding scholarship conditions.

Supervision

(93) Provide information to supervisors and candidates regarding the necessity to comply with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and the University's [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#) and are aware,

where applicable, of the working procedures of the ethics committees.

Training and induction

(94) Provide all candidates with an informative induction and orientation program.

(95) Offer candidates access to advanced training in academic and transferable skills.

(96) Provide a formal induction and orientation program for all new supervisors.

(97) Provide a comprehensive program of development workshops to all supervisors and potential supervisors.

(98) Ensure the Intellectual property rights of all parties are clearly stated.

Resources

(99) Ensure there is suitable access to physical facilities and research resources appropriate to the field of study.

(100) Ensure the University's administrative processes assist candidates to complete their degrees as expeditiously as possible within the regulations.

(101) Ensure the level of resources provided to candidates is monitored as part of the confirmation process and through regular progress reports for all candidates.

Culture

(102) Promote positive academic cultures within Colleges/Academic units to the benefit of all candidates, which ensure candidates are recognised as involved members of the host units.

(103) Ensure candidate representation on the Research Training Sub-Committee.

Progress and reporting

(104) Ensure there are progress reporting requirements that enable the views of both staff and candidates to be adequately represented.

(105) Systemically review the periodic progress reports and student experience surveys in order to make improvements to the processes and outcomes for candidates.

Research integrity and safety

(106) Ensure that all proposed research involving human participants is designed in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and ethically reviewed and monitored in accordance with the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).

(107) Ensure that all research involving animal research is designed in accordance with the NSW [Animal Research Act](#) and [Animal Research Regulation 2010 \(NSW\)](#) and the [Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th edition \(2013\)](#) and is monitored and reviewed as appropriate.

(108) Provide health and safety training to all candidates.

Completion

(109) Ensure there are clear guidelines for examiners on the University's expectations for the award of the degree.

(110) Maintain clear procedures for the nomination and appointment of examiners, conflicts of interest, examination

processes, and appeal.

(111) Provide open access to all final theses, unless an approved embargo has been applied.

(112) Provide examiner details only if the examiner(s) specifically approves the release of their identity, unless candidates are completing an oral examination as part of their examination process.

Section 6 - Collective Obligations

Grievances

(113) In the first instance, all issues and grievances relating to HDR candidature will be managed in a timely manner that assists in informal resolution at the lowest level possible.

(114) If more significant difficulties arise, representations should be made to the appropriate Head of School and/or Dean of Graduate Research. Candidates and supervisors are expected to seek negotiated solutions to any problems prior to initiating a formal complaint (See [Complaints Process](#)).

(115) The [Rules Governing Higher Degrees by Research](#) sets out the grounds on which candidates may appeal against evaluation of their candidature.

(116) The University must manage circumstances in accordance with the [Student Conduct Rule](#) where a candidate demonstrates:

- a. concerning behaviour;
- b. academic misconduct;
- c. research misconduct; or
- d. non-academic misconduct.

Section 7 - Further References

(117) [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

(118) [Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles](#).

(119) [Guidelines for Resourcing Higher Degree by Research Candidates](#).

(120) [Student Conduct Rule](#).

(121) [Thesis Examination Guidelines](#).

Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"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.

"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.

"Plagiarism" - is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

- i. copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment
- ii. using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment
- iii. collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Intellectual property rights" - All present and future rights to intellectual property including any inventions and improvements, trademarks (whether registered or common law trade marks), designs, copyright, any corresponding property rights under the Laws of any jurisdiction and any rights in respect of an invention, discovery, trade secret, secret process, know-how, concept, idea, information, process, data, or formula.

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