

# Higher Degree Research Candidature Policy

## Fact box

- **Policy owner:** Chair, Research Committee
- **Policy category:** Academic: Research
- **Policy status:** Approved
- **Approval body:** Academic Board
- **Endorsement body:** Research Committee
- **Related policies:**
  - [Higher Degree Research Examination Policy](#)
  - [Leave of Absence Policy](#)
  - [Research and Scholarship Policy](#)
  - [Research Ethics Policy](#)
  - [Research Supervision Policy](#)
  - [Student Complaint, Grievance Resolution, and Appeals Policy](#)
- **Last amended:** 22nd Aug. 2023
- **Relevant HESF:**

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify the parameters of candidature in an Alphacrucis University College (AC) Higher Degree Research (HDR) course of study.

## Scope

All HDR courses of study

## Policy

AC HDR candidates are initially admitted as “provisional” candidates when they commence the course of study. This is changed to “confirmed” status following the official confirmation of candidature process which involves an oral presentation of the research proposal to a Confirmation of Candidature Panel. Confirmation of candidature will take place within six to 12 months full time equivalent (FTE) for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Ministry (DMin), and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) candidates (longer with special permission from the Graduate Research School) after the commencement of the research component.

## Confirmation of Candidature

The purpose of this milestone is to ensure that the candidate:

- can coherently explain the research;
- is making appropriate progress;
- receives formative advice about the direction, scope, planning, methodology and feasibility of the project;
- has sufficient training and professional skills;
- has resources available to complete the course within the recommended timeframes;

- has the appropriate advisory team composition; and
- understands the pathway forward.

The principal supervisor must ensure that all compliance requirements (e.g. induction, relevant training, etc.) have been undertaken prior to the confirmation milestone. Application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) should take place after confirmation of the proposal. Until ethical clearance is obtained, there should be no form of contact with research participants, including recruitment and any data collection from human research subjects. Refer to the [Research Ethics Policy](#).

The Confirmation of Candidature Panel will usually include:

- Panel Chair – Graduate Research School Director or delegated representative;
- at least two other research active faculty members from a relevant field of research;
- an external expert in the field nominated by the principal supervisor, if required. The external expert provides a written review and if possible attends the oral presentation.

The panel must not include any of the candidate's supervisors. The supervisor(s) should attend the oral presentation and can provide comment. However, the supervisor(s) are not included in the final decision of the panel.

Success at the confirmation of candidature demonstrates the candidate is likely to produce an assessable thesis in a timely manner. The confirmation of candidature oral presentation can include other invited peers and academic colleagues for wider feedback. However, only the Confirmation of Candidature Panel decides the final result.

### **Internal Transfer**

An MPhil candidate seeking to transfer to the PhD or DMin will need to:

1. receive a distinction average for two 20 cp coursework subjects;
2. be recommended to transfer by their principal supervisor;
3. be approved to transfer by the Graduate Research School Director.

The Confirmation of Candidature Panel may also recommend that the candidate be upgraded to a doctoral award. The availability of internal transfer will be subject to the availability of places in the course. If applying for the DMin, the candidate must also meet the professional experience criteria.

### **External Transfer**

The relevant Program Director is authorised to permit an applicant who has completed a period of HDR candidature in another higher education institution to count the whole or any part of the period of this enrolment, as a period completed in a HDR course at the same level as at AC, provided that the:

1. period of advanced study and research has been carried out under supervision in accordance with required ethics legislation;
2. research is directly related to the candidate's proposed program at AC;

3. candidate shall have formally withdrawn from enrolment in the HDR course of the other institution for which the previous tenure is applicable, except in the case of jointly awarded degree approved candidates.

Responsible for implementation

Graduate Research School Director

Key stakeholders

HDR Students

Supervisors

Graduate Research School Faculty

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Procedures

### **Higher Degree Research Candidature Procedures**

#### **Confirmation of Candidature**

1. The Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel will appoint members of the Panel. A Confirmation of Candidature Proposal is to be submitted by the candidate with the approval of the principal supervisor to Graduate Research School, at least six (6) weeks before the Confirmation of Candidature to verify that it is prepared in accord with the HDR Confirmation Proposal Guide.
2. Once verified, the proposal is sent to the Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel to distribute to the Panel members at least 10 working days before the Panel convenes.
3. An oral presentation is to be delivered by the candidate to a Confirmation of Candidature Panel which is an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate a contribution to advancing knowledge in the field, justify methodological processes, and provide a summary of progress to date. This is followed by a discussion with the candidate about their proposal.
4. The Confirmation of Candidature Panel may decide:
  - 1 – the proposal is accepted, with only minor edits required;
  - 2 – the proposal requires major edits, with an extension of the due date (of three months FTE) for achieving candidature if the assessors deem the proposal to be developed appropriately but not yet ready for confirmation of candidature;
  - 3 – the proposal is not accepted and presentation at a second panel is required. After two attempts the candidate will be liable for termination of candidature. The Panel may also suggest the candidate transfer to another course.

The Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel will notify the Graduate Research School of the outcome, including written feedback for the supervisor(s) and candidate.

If a recommendation 2 is given, once the proposal is revised, the candidate submits it to the Chair who will review the proposal or arrange a reviewer to determine if the proposal is to be accepted. This reviewer is typically the Chair or a member of the original confirmation panel. This process can be repeated if the proposal needs further work.

Based on feedback from the supervisor(s) and candidate, supervisor(s) will then be confirmed by the Graduate Research School, in accordance with the Research Supervision Policy. The Graduate Research School will notify the supervisor(s) and candidate of the results.

### **Extension of Candidature**

An HDR candidate is considered out of time if the FTE of the candidature period is completed without submitting a thesis for examination. While HDR candidates are automatically re-enrolled in the program based on continued satisfactory progress, this process will cease when the FTE candidature period expires. If a candidate has not yet submitted a thesis for examination, s/he needs to formally apply for an extension of candidature with the permission of the supervisor (this rule does not apply for candidates who are in the process of making requested revisions on a submitted thesis).

The application for extension of candidature must specify the reasons for the request, and the plan for completion. Requests for extension of candidature are reviewed for approval by the Graduate Research School, and may be granted for a specified period. Unsuccessful candidates must apply for re-admission. Application for re-admission also applies to candidates whose candidature has expired without a formal application for extension of candidature. For candidates who re-apply, the period of candidature from the re-admission is to be determined by the Graduate Research School Director. Usual AC enrolment fees would apply for re-admitted candidates.

### **Leave of Absence**

Domestic HDR candidates may apply for a total of 12 months FTE leave of absence, in total, based on medical or extreme extenuating circumstances. The application for leave of absence is to be submitted in writing to the Graduate Research School, with a recommendation from the supervisor. Registry is to be advised. Candidates who have utilised the full extent of their FTE candidature period are not normally eligible to apply for a leave of absence.

In addition to these Leave of Absence entitlements, candidates may also request up to 2 semesters of parental leave per child.

### **Appeals**

For appeals, candidates should follow the [Complaint and Grievance Resolution Policy](#).

### **Intervention**

Candidates whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory at an annual review (annual report provided by the candidates and principal supervisor, as per [Research Supervision Policy](#)) will be issued a notification of at risk for termination of candidature by the Graduate Research School and advised to follow an intervention strategy which could involve the following:

- review of supervisory arrangement by the Graduate Research School;
- review of candidate's circumstances;
- referral to pastoral counselling if necessary;
- referral to English language and/or study skills training if necessary.

The candidate and principal supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Research School Director, are required to devise a plan for improving the candidate's progress, with tangible goals to be

accomplished within a three-month (FTE) period. At the end of this time the progress will be reviewed again by the Graduate Research School Director to ascertain whether the intervention has been successful or not. Candidates whose intervention has been successful would be allowed to progress in their candidature. The candidature of candidates who have not made satisfactory progress even after the intervention will be terminated.

### **Research Funding**

AC provides research funding and support for HDR candidates in several ways, including:

- General research and writing software licensing (e.g. Office 365, Zotero)
- Other software and licensing needed to conduct interviews and analysing data (e.g. Zoom, NVivo)
- An additional library membership for any research library
- Research methods training support
- Professional development seminars
- Academic conference funding
- Academic writing support (e.g. Grammarly Premium, Studiosity)
- In some cases AC may also provide support for candidates whose thesis requires professional editing.

Requests for funding or other support should be made to the Graduate Research School.

### **Allocation of HDR Candidate Work Stations**

AC provides HDR candidates access to work stations and facilities on a needs basis. These work stations are provided as a regular study area for candidates who are carrying out research projects. The Graduate Research School, in consultation with the relevant campus facilities manager, considers all applications for HDR work stations and makes the allocation.

### **Allocation of Library Resources**

The AC library has funding allocated specifically to purchase texts required by HDR candidates. Acquisition requests should be made directly to the relevant librarian.

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