

COURSE HANDBOOK

OVERVIEW

BECOME A THOUGHT LEADER		
The PhD program builds on AC's growing research profile, to equip students to be independent researchers and make a substantial contribution toward advancement of knowledge and practice within their chosen field	Program Director	Professor Johannes Luetz
	Level	AQF Level 8
	Qualification	Graduate Certificate
	Subjects	2
	IELTS	7.5
	Languages of Instruction	English
	ASCED Code	091703
	Accreditation	Self-accreditation
	Course Length	6 months full-time (up to 1 year part-time)

The Graduate Certificate in Research Methods (GCR) is a two-unit program designed to introduce students to the principles and practices of advanced research in the broad fields of Theology, Business, and Education. It provides essential training in research design, methodology, and academic writing, equipping students with the foundational skills needed for further postgraduate research.

The GCR is particularly suited for students who wish to pursue higher research degrees but require structured preparation. Successful completion of the program provides a direct pathway into the Master of Philosophy (MPhil), where students can extend their skills through independent research leading toward a PhD.

Through coursework taught by experienced researchers, candidates gain the ability to critically evaluate scholarly literature, formulate research questions, and apply appropriate methods within their discipline. This training equips graduates to engage confidently with the challenges of advanced academic study and research.

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

AC GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Christian Worldview

A knowledge of the Christian story, derived from the Scriptures and tradition of the church. An awareness of the implications of this story for self-identity in the context of local and global communities. This includes a commitment to engage with alternate worldviews, showing appreciation of the values and perspectives of others.

Leadership

The ability to provide effective Christian leadership to individuals, groups and organisations, demonstrated in the capacity to influence and enable others to accomplish worthwhile objectives which contribute to the human good and the kingdom of God. This includes seeking to emulate the example of Jesus Christ in serving and empowering others.

Integrity and Justice

The ability to apply a Christian worldview in the diverse situations and responsibilities of life, and to exercise faith, hope, love and generosity as prevailing attitudes. This includes the active promotion of the gospel, social justice, equality, mutual respect and an ecological ethos.

Communications

The ability to communicate effectively to a range of audiences, in appropriate contexts using high levels of verbal, written and technological skills. This includes visual and media literacy, numeracy, rhetoric and persuasion.

Personal and Social Skills

Demonstrate relational skills that incorporate the flexibility for both independent and collaborative situations. This includes personal and group organizational skills, conflict management and resolution, as well as the ability to value and respect the opinions of others.

Critical and Creative Thinking

A capacity for critical and reflective thinking that is explored not only individually but within a community context. This includes a capacity to be creative and to research, analyse and resolve problems in innovative and prophetic ways.

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

Professional Knowledge

Maintenance and use of knowledge about a discipline or field, involving theoretical, conceptual and methodological elements. This includes striving continually and independently to secure further knowledge and where appropriate, defined professional skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Specification	AQF Level 10 Doctors Degree (Research)	AC Learning outcomes	AC Graduate Attributes
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have advanced theoretical and technical knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.	Demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate an advanced and integrated understanding of constructs and concepts in the field, drawing on a substantial body of scholarly literature.• Develop a foundational understanding of research principles and methods, and advanced knowledge of specific research approaches used in the discipline.	Critical and Creative Thinking Professional Knowledge

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Specification	AQF Level 10 Doctors Degree (Research)	AC Learning outcomes	AC Graduate Attributes
Skills	Graduates at this level will have advanced cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Analyse critically, evaluate and transform information to complete a range of activitiesanalyse, generate and transmit solutions to complex problemstransmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others	Demonstrated ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluate, synthesise, and critically engage theoretical knowledge in the discipline.Critically evaluate a range of different research methodologies and make an informed judgment of the suitable methodology for a chosen research project.Effectively communicate complex ideas, concepts and proposed solutions to peers and general audiences in diverse contexts.	Integrity and Justice Communication Personal and Social Skills Critical and Creative Thinking Professional Knowledge
Specification	AQF Level 10 Doctors Degree (Research)	AC Learning outcomes	AC Graduate Attributes

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.	Demonstrated ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulate new questions and apply the knowledge and skills developed within the discipline area.• Work independently, responsibly and with the level of professionalism and integrity expected of a higher education researcher.• Design a research project to generate new knowledge in the discipline area.	Christian Worldview Integrity and Justice Communication Personal and Social Skills Critical and Creative Thinking Professional Knowledge
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COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

COURSE STRUCTURE (CURRENT)

<p>The course consists of 40 credit points comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• one core research methods unit (20 credit points)• one subject at 700 level (20 credit point) to be taken from the area of specialisation <p>To qualify for award of the degree of Graduate Certificate in Research Methods a candidate shall complete at least 40 credit points.</p>		
CONTENT OF THE COURSE OF STUDY		CREDIT POINTS
CORE SUBJECTS	RES701 Research Methods	20
	XXX706 Advanced Studies in Discipline Area	20
RULES OF PROGRESSION	Refer to candidature policy and procedure	
OTHER PROTOCOLS OF THE COURSE	To be eligible to graduate, students must pass at least 40 credit points	
BRIDGING/NESTED COURSES	There are no nested awards within the Graduate Certificate in Research Methods.	

For information on the teaching faculty for this subject, please visit our [website](#).

Career Opportunities

Graduates of the Graduate Certificate in Research Methods will be equipped with advanced skills in research design, critical analysis, and academic communication, which are valuable across a wide range of professional contexts. Career opportunities include:

- Higher Research Degrees: The GCR provides a recognised pathway into the Master of Philosophy (MPhil), leading toward doctoral study (PhD or DMin).
- Education and Training: Enhanced skills for teaching, curriculum development, and supervision in tertiary or vocational education.
- Professional Practice: Application of research methods to inform decision-making, program evaluation, and evidence-based practice in business, education, non-profit, and ministry settings.
- Policy and Leadership Roles: Capacity to contribute to research-informed policy development and strategic planning within organisations and communities.

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

This award is particularly suited for professionals who wish to strengthen their research capacity for use in their workplace, or who are considering progression into advanced research degrees.

ADMISSION CRITERIA

Academic Entry Requirements

Applicants with Recent Secondary Education

This course of study requires the completion of higher education study at an authorised institution. Recent secondary education graduates are not eligible for direct entry into this course.

Applicants with Vocational Education and Training Study

This course of study requires the completion of a higher education qualification by an authorised institution. Applicants with a Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification only are not eligible for direct entry into this course.

Applicants with Higher Education Study

Completion of an AQF Level 8 bachelors (honours 1 or 2a) degree in a relevant field, or equivalent

Applicants with Work and Life Experience

In exceptional circumstances, the Program Director may recommend that an applicant be admitted who does not have the qualifications specified. In this case, evidence must be supplied to verify that the applicant has equivalent qualifications based on academic and professional attainment and demonstration of an appropriate capacity for the research.

For further information about AC's Academic entry requirements, please see:

- [Higher Education Provisional Entry Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

English Language Proficiency

Overseas students are required to demonstrate their English proficiency skills. Such students admitted into our programs must attain an overall IELTS (or equivalent) score of 7.5 (with no score below 7.0 in any of the four skills areas, and a score of no less than 8 in speaking and listening) on entry into the program. IELTS (or equivalent) is not required for applicants who have successfully completed at least two years of full-time study (or equivalent) of a secondary or tertiary qualification at AQF Diploma level or higher, where the medium of study was English and completed no earlier than two years prior to the commencement of the course of study to which the student seeks admission.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the [International Student Office](#) if they are unsure of the equivalence of their English language proficiency test scores.

Essential Requirements

International Students must demonstrate knowledge of research methodology equivalent to RES601 and methodology in the area of specialisation. In exceptional circumstances the Program Director may recommend that an applicant be admitted who does not have the qualifications specified. In this case, evidence must be supplied to verify that the applicant has equivalent qualifications based on academic and professional attainment and demonstration of an appropriate capacity for the research.

Special Admissions Pathways

AC's [Admissions Policy](#) details the special admission pathways for our courses of study. The Special Admission Pathways are evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Program Director. A student's admission requirements may be reconsidered on educational disadvantage grounds, including but not limited to:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, where the normal entry path has not been followed;
- socioeconomic reasons (such as low-family income or poor living conditions);
- learning or language difficulties;
- physical disability;
- completion of a prescribed program of non-award study (four subjects or 40 credit points) with an overall GPA of 1.8 or better.

For a full list of educational disadvantage grounds, please see AC's [Admissions Policy](#).

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

AC is committed to providing a learning environment that is free from discrimination on the basis of income, age, disability, social and ethnic background, location or gender. AC endeavours to increase opportunities for people of all backgrounds to participate in training programs, and implement programs that take into account the specific needs of participants. AC encourages students to inform AC of any disability, medical condition or learning need that may impact on your studies to arrange a study plan that best suits your needs.

HOW TO APPLY

If you are ready to apply, please complete the [HDR Application Form](#).

Credit transfers and recognised prior learning (RPL)

You may be entitled to credit for prior learning, whether formal or informal. Formal learning can include previous study in higher education, vocational education, or adult and community education. Informal learning can include on the job learning or various kinds of work and life experience. Credit can reduce the amount of study needed to complete a degree.

For further information about credit and recognition of prior learning please see AC's [Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#) or contact our [Student Support](#) team.

HOW TO ENROL

Once you have returned a signed copy of your Letter of Offer to accept your place at AC, you will be invited to enrol in your specific subjects in the next academic period. Students are advised to consult their timetable (can be found [here](#)), and contact the [Student Support Team](#) for tailored academic advice before completing the enrolment form.

Applications for credit transfers or recognised prior learning will be communicated to you once they have been processed.

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Support Team

AC's Student Support Team and Higher Degree Research Support Officer exists to ensure you get from Orientation Day to Graduation Day with a smile on your face!

Academic Support

- Tailored academic guidance
- Assessment variation to accommodate disabilities, medical conditions and/or learning needs
- Physical libraries
- Access to online journal databases
- Access to eBook resources
- Resources are also provided online for self-development

Non-Academic Support

- Pastoral Care
- Chaplains
- Professional counselling
- Careers guidance
- Extra-curricular and community services
- SRC – Student Representative Council
- Recreation areas

Student Life

All students can take part in:

- mission trips and community service projects
- weekly chapel services
- lunches and gatherings on campus
- opportunities to hear or present research
- masterclasses to take your skills and knowledge to the next level
- social events both on and away from campus
- exchange programs with other colleges and universities around the world

...and much, much more! To find out what is happening near you or to get specific details just contact the Student Support Team:

Email: studentsupport@ac.edu.au

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

Phone: (02) 8893 9005

<https://www.ac.edu.au/current-students/student-support/>

COURSE HANDBOOK

STUDENT PROFILE

The table below gives an indication of the likely peer cohort for new students at AC. It provides data on students that commenced study and passed the census date in the most relevant recent intake period for which data are available, including those admitted through all offer rounds and international students studying in Australia.

Applicant background	Reporting Year: 2024	
	Number of students	Percentage of all students
(A) Past higher education study (includes a bridging or enabling course)	N/P	N/P
(B) Past vocational education and training (VET) study	N/A	N/A
(C) Work and life experience (Admitted on the basis of previous achievement other than the above)	N/A	N/A
(D) Recent secondary education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admitted solely on the basis of ATAR (<i>regardless of whether this includes the impact of adjustment factors such as equity or subject bonus points</i>) Admitted where both ATAR and additional criteria were considered (<i>e.g. portfolio, audition, extra test, early offer conditional on minimum ATAR</i>) Admitted on the basis of other criteria only and ATAR was <u>not</u> a factor (<i>e.g. special consideration, audition alone, schools recommendation scheme with no minimum ATAR requirement</i>) 	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A
International students	N/A	N/A
All students	N/P	N/P

Note: "<5" – the number of students is less than 5.

N/A – Students not accepted in this category.

N/P – Not published: the number is hidden to prevent calculation of numbers in cells with less than 5 students.

ATAR-based offers only	ATAR
Highest rank to receive an offer	N/A
Median rank to receive an offer	N/A
Lowest rank to receive an offer	N/A

Note: "<5" – the number of students is less than 5.

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

Note: This table relates to all students made an offer on the basis of ATAR alone or ATAR in combination with other factors. Students admitted into a course of study based on a Special Admission Pathway or otherwise not based on their ATAR are not included in this table.

COURSE HANDBOOK

WHERE TO GET FURTHER INFORMATION

ac.edu.au

AC's [website](http://ac.edu.au) is the best place to discover what's happening at AC and explore our courses, campuses and support services. If you are not yet an AC student, our [Future Students](#) team are here to help find the right course for you!

Moodle

Once you begin your studies at AC, you will use [Moodle](#) as your Learning Management System (LMS) to access all your subject content, the AC Academic Handbook, Study Skills and Textbook Information. New Students can also use Moodle to view our Induction Videos.

International Students

Nothing beats the experience of being part of our community and participating in our classroom discussions! Alternatively, for students who decide to study from their home country, AC brings education to you by offering many subjects and degrees by distance education allowing you to study from anywhere in the world. Flexible delivery means that you will have access to our e-Learning platform which provides resources, podcasts, online forums and tutor assistance that allows you to complete your studies from your home country.

Further information about International Students, including the application process, international recognition of AC courses of study and FAQ's, is available on our [website](#).

Alternatively, our [Future Students](#) team are available to answer any questions you may have about your requirements as an onshore or offshore International Students at AC.

QILT

Thinking about higher education institutions and study areas? Wish you could ask someone about their experience? The [QILT website](#) helps you compare official study experience and employment outcomes data from Australian higher education institutions.

TEQSA National Register

The purpose of the [TEQSA National Register](#) is to be the authoritative source of information on the status of registered higher education providers in Australia.

COURSE HANDBOOK



Alphacrucis University College

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN RESEARCH METHODS

Complaints and Grievances

If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your application, AC's [Complaint and Grievance Resolution Policy](#) outlines the procedure for resolving a complaint or grievance.