Higher Degree by Research - Admission and Enrolment Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to providing an environment that enables and supports transformative education through higher degrees by research (HDR) and drives world-class research in areas critical to the sustainable and prosperous development of Northern Australia and the wider region.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This procedure stipulates the principles and practices that guide the admission and enrolment of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This procedure applies to all HDR courses, candidates enrolled in these courses, and University staff responsible for supporting HDR candidates and courses.

Section 4 - Procedure

Applications

(4) To apply, applicants must use the appropriate online form, available from:

a. the Higher Degree by Research (Domestic Students) Website for domestic applicants; or
b. the Higher Degree by Research (International Students) Website for international applicants.

(5) Applicants are responsible for providing detailed evidence to clearly demonstrate their eligibility.

Eligibility

(6) To enrol in a HDR degree, applicants must:

a. fulfill the minimum level of English language proficiency, as detailed in the English Language Proficiency Policy; and
b. fulfill the minimum level of academic proficiency.

(7) To achieve the minimum level of academic proficiency to enrol in a Masters by Research, applicants must have completed:

a. at least half a semester FTE (20 Credit points (CP)) of relevant research activity at AQF Level 8 or above in a course in a relevant discipline; or

b. equivalent levels of research activity as approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(8) To achieve the minimum level of academic proficiency to enrol in a PhD, applicants must have completed:

a. at least one semester FTE (40 Credit points (CP)) of relevant research activity, with a GPA equivalent to a Distinction average, at AQF Level 8 or above in a course in a relevant discipline; or
b. equivalent levels of research activity as approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(9) Applicants who have achieved the minimum levels of English and academic proficiency may not be offered admission because of the following reasons:

a. limited availability of appropriate supervision, resources, or workspaces;
b. limited overlap between the expertise of the applicant and the research priorities of the University;
c. unsatisfactory progress in a previous HDR course; and
d. behaviour that is evidently incompatible with the Code of Conduct - Students.

(10) To guide these decisions, applicants must supply information about their prior enrolment in HDR courses at the time of application.

Assessment of Applications

(11) After an application is received, Research and Innovation will seek:

a. endorsement from the Principal Supervisor and the Faculty (including Menzies) in which the candidate would be enrolled, hereafter called the Home faculty; and
b. approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(12) The Principal Supervisor must meet with the applicant on at least one occasion to discuss their experience and goals for their proposed project. This meeting can happen in person or via an electronic meeting.

(13) After the Principal Supervisor has met with the applicant, the home faculty will decide whether to endorse the application. The home faculty must consider whether:

a. the candidate has fulfilled the minimum levels of academic proficiency;
b. the candidate has been assigned a registered Principal Supervisor and at least one registered Associate Supervisor;
c. the research project is compatible with the research priorities of the University;
d. the faculty and campus can offer the resources, support, and supervision the proposed research needs;
e. the project will raise issues around sanctions, defence controls, and foreign interference; and
f. for applicants applying for PhD by prior publication or research artefact/object – exegesis, transferring from another university, or returning to study after withdrawal, the home faculty and Dean of Graduate Studies will determine the recognition of prior learning equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) based on a presentation by the applicant to an assessment panel.

(14) The Dean of Graduate Studies may impose special conditions on successful applicants, such as coursework requirements.

(15) Approved applicants will be advised by Research and Innovation if domestic and CDU Global if international.

(16) Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback about this decision from Research and Innovation.

Offer of Admission

(17) Approved applicants will receive a formal written offer that stipulates:

a. the course;
b. the Home faculty in which they will be enrolled and the names of supervisors;
c. the latest date in which they can commence candidature;
d. their study load (full time or part time) and mode (internal or external);
e. the maximum course duration;
f. the title of their thesis and the field of education;
g. standard conditions of candidature and any other imposed conditions;
h. any milestones and training requirements they must fulfill;
i. tuition fees, payments and refunds;
j. any requirements, conditions or benefits under the Educational Standards for Overseas Students (ESOS) National Standards;
k. instructions on how to accept the offer; and
l. the credit towards the course approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies under the recognition of prior learning assessment process and endorsed by the ADR Review Panel.

(18) To accept an offer, applicant must complete the instructions outlined in the formal offer. Research and Innovation will enrol the applicants who accept this offer on the nominated agreed start date.

Deferrals

(19) Before applicants enrol, they may apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies to defer the commencement of their course. The Dean of Graduate Studies may consider:

a. the conditions of relevant scholarships;
b. the needs of this applicant;
c. the availability of supervisors, resources, and facilities;
d. the feasibility of this research if delayed; and
e. any other considerations and regulations

(20) The Dean of Graduate Studies may approve a deferral of 6 months or less from the date of their offer. In compassionate and compelling circumstances, the Dean of Graduate Studies may consider a deferral that exceeds this limit. Applications to defer the commencement date of a scholarship must accord with the Higher Degree by Research - Scholarship Policy and Procedure.

Ongoing Enrolment

(21) Once enrolled in an HDR course, candidates must maintain continuous enrolment throughout their candidature unless granted a leave of absence. To maintain continuous enrolment, candidates must;

a. fulfil their progression milestones as outlined in the Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure; and
b. comply with student visa conditions where relevant.

(22) Research and Innovation will remind candidates to re-enrol annually. Failure to maintain enrolment may result in a request to show cause.

Full Time Versus Part Time Enrolment

(23) Candidates may apply to enrol part time, for part of all of their candidature, using the Change of Enrolment Status form at HDR Forms and Codes. Requests to study part time must be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and the Home faculty and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. In exceptional circumstances, the Dean of Graduate Studies can approve the enrolment status of candidates retrospectively.

(24) Part-time candidates should dedicate approximately half their working hours to their course. When calculating due dates, two days part time is equivalent to one day full time.

(25) To inform the decision as to whether a candidate should be permitted to study part time, consideration should be given to:

a. whether the corresponding delay in completion could diminish the feasibility or significance of this project;
b. whether the corresponding delay in completion is consistent with scholarship conditions and other regulations;
c. whether the benefits to the candidate offset the complications of these delays; and
d. whether this arrangement accords with the Higher Degree by Research - Scholarship Policy and Procedure.

(26) International candidates on a student visa must seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs if they wish to reduce their study load.

External Mode

(27) Candidates may be enrolled as external candidates, in which they study away from the University. To decide whether to approve these arrangements, the Dean of Graduate Studies will need to consider:

a. whether candidates can access the supervision and resources they need in this location;
b. the risks to candidates in this location;
c. whether the principal supervisor can support and monitor the progress of this candidate; and
d. whether the candidates will be exposed to a research environment that fosters the development of their research, personal, and career skills.
e. International candidates on a student visa are not normally eligible to enrol in external mode. International candidates not on a student visa must check their current visa for study limitations before applying to enrol externally.

(28) If approved, the Home faculty must commit to supplying the resources and services outlined in the Higher Degree by Research - Minimum Resources Procedure.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(29) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(30) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(31) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	13th February 2026
Review Date	13th February 2029
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	13th February 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection +61 8 89466890
Implementation Officer	Steven Greenland Dean of Graduate Studies
Enquiries Contact	Steven Greenland Dean of Graduate Studies

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Home faculty" - The Faculty in which a Higher Degree by Research candidate is enrolled. The Menzies School of Health Research is the home faculty for students of Menzies.

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

"Credit points (CP)" - An indication of the estimated student study load to meet learning outcomes. CP are used in calculating a student's Grade Point Average. Unit study loads and course study loads are both measured by CP.

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.