Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin 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) These procedures set out the process for establishing milestones and training requirements for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates, including research proposals and supervision agreements.

(3) These procedures also set out how progress and milestones are to be monitored, reported and, where necessary, enforced.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to all HDR courses, candidates enrolled in HDR courses, and University staff responsible for supporting HDR candidates and courses.

Section 4 - Procedure

Induction

(5) All HDR Candidates must receive comprehensive induction during the first month of their candidature. As part of this induction, Research and Innovation will outline:

a. the resources, facilities, and services that are available to all HDR candidates;
b. the milestones and training that all HDR candidates must complete;
c. the forms that candidates must complete to demonstrate their progress, to request leave, to update their enrolment, or to submit their thesis; and
d. the rules, policies, and procedures that HDR candidates must observe, including regulations on research integrity and the Student Code of Conduct.

(6) CDU Global will present information that is specific to the needs of International candidates. The Faculty or Institute in which the candidate is assigned (the Home Faculty) will present information that is relevant to specific cohorts such as:

a. safe work practices in a particular field;
b. organising resources and funding; or
c. other practices that are particular to the Faculty or Institute.

(7) The Principal Supervisor should also use the guidelines [Enhancing Meetings with Research Candidates - The First Meeting](#) to help candidates better understand their course and University.

Confirmation of Candidature

(8) Until candidates complete their confirmation of candidature, they are admitted on a probationary basis. To complete the confirmation of candidature, candidates must construct a supervision agreement, submit an extensive research proposal, and complete an oral presentation. In some circumstances, candidates may also need to fulfill specific conditions that are stipulated on the offer letter.

Supervision Agreement

(9) Within three months of commencement, candidates must, in concert with their supervisors, construct a Supervision Agreement. This agreement stipulates the expectations of how candidates and supervisors plan to work together, how often they will meet, and the responsibilities of each. To develop this agreement:

a. candidates and supervisors are encouraged to consider the clauses that appear in the [Supervision agreement guidelines](#); and

b. candidates and supervisors record this agreement in the [HDR14 - Supervision Agreement](#) and send this form to Research and Innovation.

(10) The University should have measures to evaluate and to encourage compliance with this Supervision Agreement. For example, the progress reports could invite supervisors and candidates to indicate the degree to which the other has complied with this agreement.

The Research Proposal

(11) Candidates write a research proposal between 7,000 to 10,000 words if enrolled in a PhD and 5,000 to 7,000 words if enrolled in a Masters by Research. This is submitted with an [HDR13 - Research Proposal Cover Sheet](#) to the Home Faculty, within six months of commencement FTE if enrolled in a PhD or four months of commencement FTE if enrolled in a Masters by Research

(12) In accordance with the guidelines [How to Write a Research Proposal](#), this research proposal must include:

a. an abstract, an overview of the research, or both;

b. a literature review to justify the importance and unique contribution of this research;

c. an outline and defence of the methods and methodology;

d. ethical, legal, and safety considerations;

e. the budget;

f. a timeline of activities to complete; and

g. a communication plan, such as any likely publications.

Confirmation of Candidature Panel and Presentation

(13) Between two and four weeks after candidates submit the research proposal, they outline this proposal in an oral presentation. The Home Faculty will organise a Confirmation of Candidature Panel, comprising three or more academics and a chair to assess the research proposal and oral presentation, including whether:

a. the supervisors of this candidate have the requisite capabilities in the theories and methods of this research project;

b. the candidate has acquired, or could readily acquire, the capabilities they need to complete the project;

c. the research project is suitable and feasible within the timeline, budget, and ethical constraints and as compliant with relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures; and

d. the scope of this project is appropriate to this degree.

(14) The chair and at least one other panel member should:

a. be staff members of CDU; and

b. not be members of the supervisory panel.

(15) These academics should:

a. have attained a PhD;

b. have developed expertise in the discipline or methods of the proposed research;

c. not report am actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest with the project; and

d. not have a dependent or romantic relationship with the candidate or supervisors.

(16) [Helpful Guidelines to Conduct the HDR Confirmation of Candidature Process](#) set out the:

a. role of this panel, such as applying a rubric to evaluate the research proposal and oral presentation;

b. role of Principal Supervisors, such as helping to organize the presentation;

c. role of Home Faculties; and

d. the audience that should be invited to the oral presentation.

(17) Within two days if possible, the Confirmation of Candidature Panel complete the [Confirmation of Candidature HDR16 - College Assessment of Research Proposal and Oral Defence](#) to evaluate the research proposal and oral presentation and to recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies that:

a. the candidature should be confirmed;

b. the research proposal, oral presentation, or both should be revised; or

c. the candidature should not be confirmed.

(18) If the Dean of Graduate Studies approves the recommendation to revise the research proposal, oral presentation, or both, [Confirmation of Candidature HDR16 - College Assessment of Research Proposal and Oral Defence](#) will need to be submitted again.

(19) If the Dean of Graduate Studies approves the recommendation to withhold confirmation, the Research Committee will invite the candidates to show cause as to why their enrolment should be maintained.

(20) The Dean of Graduate Studies can approve extensions to the confirmation of candidature, but only in accordance with the document [What Happens if Milestones are Delayed](#).

Progress After Confirmation of Candidature

Mid-candidature Presentation

(21) PhD candidates must complete a mid-candidature presentation. During this presentation, candidates are to outline the literature and their research questions, methods, and progress to this point. Candidates will also describe any challenges they experienced and how they modified their plan to address these challenges or improve their research.

(22) This presentation should be completed within 24 months FTE of commencement. The Home Faculty will apply a

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similar process to the confirmation of candidature oral presentations for the mid-candidature presentation, although it is not necessary to submit any new forms at this stage. The mid-candidature presentation may also have a larger audience, such as a wider range of academic staff or industry partners.

(23) The Home Faculty will record a failure to complete this presentation successfully in the annual reports. This failure might, if consistent with other information, indicate the candidate has not progressed satisfactorily and may culminate in a show cause letter.

Pre-examination Presentation

(24) Between three and nine months FTE before the planned thesis submission date, PhD and Masters by Research candidates must complete a pre-examination presentation. This presentation is similar to the mid-candidature presentation except that candidates will outline the entire research program and key findings

(25) The purpose of this presentation is to recognise the significant achievement of this candidate thus far as well as to optimise the thesis before submission.

Progress Reports

(26) At least once a year, Research and Innovation will instruct candidates, principal supervisors, and Home Faculties to complete a Progress Report Form. These forms outline:

   a. any challenges that candidates and supervisors are experiencing as well as measures that could be introduced to address these challenges;
   b. the extent to which the candidates and supervisors are complying with the Supervision Agreement; and
   c. the progress of candidates on their research, milestones, and training.

(27) In response to these reports:

   a. the Home Faculty may propose recommended actions;
   b. the Dean of Graduate Studies can approve these recommended actions as well as suggest other actions; and
   c. Research and Innovation will communicate these recommended actions to the Principal Supervisor and candidate.

(28) If progress is inadequate and plans to facilitate progress have been unsuccessful or if progress reports are not completed candidates may be granted probation.

Training Throughout the Candidature

Minimum Training

(29) The Letter of Offer to Candidates will specify the minimum level of training that candidates must complete. The Offer Letter should stipulate:

   a. the type and level of training that candidates must complete;
   b. the topics that candidates must develop familiarity with;
   c. the years in which the candidates must complete this training; and
   d. any training that must be completed before the confirmation of candidature

(30) This training must be organised or endorsed by the University and include:

   a. a significant level of training in research integrity, including training around falsification, fabrication, plagiarism,

authorship, data management, and research ethics;
  b. training in research, personal, and career skills.

(31) Candidates will need to maintain evidence they have completed this training. Evidence may include certificates of completion or summaries of the skills they acquired. Candidates cannot be awarded the degree until they fulfill this minimum level of training unless approved by the Research Committee.

Development Plan

(32) Candidates should construct a development plan and update this plan over time in concert with their supervisors. This plan should stipulate:

  a. the knowledge, skills, and attributes the candidates should acquire to facilitate their research and career; and
  b. how and when they plan to acquire these capabilities, such as which courses or internships they will complete.

(33) When completing progress reports, supervisors will be invited to indicate the degree to which candidates have achieved this plan.

Section 5 - Non-compliance

(34) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Staff and Code of Conduct - Students is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures.

(35) 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 Governance Framework, Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

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Implementation Officer	Steven Greenland Dean of Graduate Studies
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Home Faculty" - The Faculty in which a Higher Degree by Research candidate is enrolled

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

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