Higher Degree by Research - Progression 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 set out the process for establishing milestones and training requirements for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates, including research proposals and supervision charters.

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

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This procedure 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 information 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 Code of Conduct - Students.

(6) CDU Global will provide information that is specific to the needs of international candidates.

(7) The faculty in which the candidate is assigned (the home faculty) will provide information that is relevant to specific cohorts such as:

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

(8) The principal supervisor should help candidates better understand their course and University.

Confirmation of candidature

(9) Until candidates complete their confirmation of candidature, they are admitted on a probationary basis. To complete the confirmation of candidature, candidates must agree to the HDR Student and Supervision Charter, submit an extensive research proposal, and complete an oral presentation. In some circumstances, candidates may also need to fulfill specific conditions that are stipulated in the offer letter.

(10) The Dean of Graduate Studies may waive the Confirmation of Candidature requirement for candidates submitting a thesis by prior publication, and stipulate alternative probationary requirements and milestones for these candidates on admission. Such conditions will be included in the candidate's letter of offer.

(11) The Dean of Graduate Studies may provide reciprocal approval of confirmation of candidature for candidates transferring their HDR candidature from another university and having already undertaken a similar process on submission of the relevant evidence.

HDR student and supervisor charter

(12) Within three months of commencement, candidates must sign a declaration to say they have read and understood the CDU HDR Student and Supervisor Charter.

(13) The University should have measures to evaluate and to encourage compliance with this charter, including student and supervisor training and assessment.

Research proposal

(14) 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 to the home faculty with a Research Proposal Coversheet form found at [HDR Forms and Codes](#), within six months of commencement FTE if enrolled in a PhD or four months of commencement FTE if enrolled in a Masters by Research.

(15) This research proposal must include:

   a. an abstract, or 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 justification 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

(16) Between two and four weeks after candidates submit the research proposal, they outline this proposal in a public oral presentation.

(17) The home faculty will organise a confirmation of candidature panel, comprising three or more academics and a chair. None of the candidates' supervisors may be included on the confirmation of candidature panel which will 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;

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the Governance Document Library for the latest version.

Page 2 of 7

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 is compliant with relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures; and

d. the scope and quality of this project is appropriate for this degree.

(18) The chair and at least one other panel member must be staff members of the University.

(19) These academics should:

a. have attained a PhD;

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

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

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

(20) Within two days if possible, the Confirmation of Candidature Panel complete the Faculty Assessment of Research Proposal and Oral Defence form found at [HDR Forms and Codes](#) 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.

(21) If the Dean of Graduate Studies approves the recommendation to revise the research proposal, oral presentation, or both, the Faculty Assessment of Research Proposal and Oral Defence form found at [HDR Forms and Codes](#) must be submitted again.

(22) 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.

(23) No extensions are permissible for the confirmation of candidature milestone except for approved leave of absence.

(24) HDR Students who have not completed their confirmation of candidature within 2 weeks of their original milestone due date, notwithstanding approved leave, will be asked to show cause as to why their enrolment should be maintained.

Progress after confirmation of candidature

Mid-candidature presentation and progress report

(25) PhD candidates commencing their degree from 2023 onwards must complete a mid-candidature presentation. During this presentation, candidates are to outline the literature review, 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.

(26) This presentation should be completed within 24 months FTE of commencement. The home faculty will apply a similar process to the confirmation of candidature oral presentations for the mid-candidature presentation and submit the mid-candidature presentation form found at [HDR Forms and Codes](#) to Research and Innovation when this milestone is completed. The mid-candidature presentation may also have a larger audience, such as a wider range of academic staff or industry partners.

(27) PhD candidates commencing their degree from 2023 onwards must also submit a progress report within 24

months of commencement if they have not presented their mid-candidature presentation by then. This would apply to students studying part-time or who have taken leave of absence and the intention is to check in on the students' progress in the absence of another milestone.

(28) Failure to complete the mid-candidature presentation or the progress report will culminate in a show cause letter from the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(29) The Dean of Graduate Studies may waive the mid-candidature presentation and progress report requirement for candidates submitting a thesis by prior publication, or in other circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Final year presentation

(30) From 2024 onwards, PhD candidates must present their key findings at the annual CDU HDR conference during their expected final year of candidacy, within 36 months FTE of commencement. In exceptional circumstances, an alternative venue may be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(31) Compliance with this milestone will be monitored by Research and Innovation.

Progress reports

(32) As required, the Dean of Graduate Studies may 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 HDR Student and Supervisor Charter; and
c. the progress of candidates on their research, milestones, and training.

(33) 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.

(34) If progress is inadequate and plans to facilitate progress have been unsuccessful or if progress reports are not completed, candidates may be placed on probation by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(35) If a supervisor does not complete a progress report when requested the Dean of Graduate Studies may consider the removal of a supervisor from the Supervision Register.

Communicating concerns

(36) Outside of the progress reporting framework, if a faculty Associate Dean Research and Research Training or Menzies equivalent, or a supervisor has concerns about an HDR student's progress, they should notify the Candidate Progression Coordinator in Research and Innovation in writing including what steps are being taken to address the issues. Any concerns will be discussed with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(37) If a student has concerns about their progress that they feel is not being effectively addressed by the supervisor or faculty, they should notify the Candidate Progression Coordinator in Research and Innovation including what steps are being taken to try to have the concerns addressed. Any concerns and actions will be discussed with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(38) Once a concern is raised, the Dean of Graduate Studies may request a meeting with all or any of the relevant parties such as the student, the supervisor/s and the Associate Dean Research and Research Training to discuss the issue/s and possible solutions. The student may wish to bring a support person, who is not a solicitor or barrister, to the meeting.

(39) The Dean of Graduate Studies may recommend the following actions and an associated, reasonable timeframe in response to a concern:

   a. ongoing monitoring of the concern by Research and Innovation until it is resolved;
   b. recommend the student apply for a leave of absence;
   c. put the student in touch with other support services as required;
   d. changes to the supervisory panel;
   e. supervisor training;
   f. skills development for the student;
   g. a collaborative support plan; and/or
   h. putting the student on probation.

(40) Research and Innovation will communicate these recommended actions and any deadlines/timeframes to the principal supervisor and the candidate in writing and monitor the concerns as required.

Collaborative support plan

(41) If a student, supervisor, Associate Dean Research and Research Training or Dean of Graduate Studies has concerns about progress, an HDR student may be offered a collaborative support plan for three or six months as an alternative to probation. This may include the following as agreed by the parties:

   a. regular meetings with CDU student support, language and learning advisors, the faculty Associate Dean Research and Research Training and the Dean of Graduate Studies;
   b. a skills development plan for the student which utilises available training courses and resources at CDU; and
   c. skills development training for the supervisor/s.

HDR candidate probation

(42) If the Dean of Graduate Studies places an HDR student on probation they will specify:

   a. the length of probation period;
   b. the expected outcomes during and on conclusion of the probationary period;
   c. the support the student should expect from their supervisors and faculty;
   d. how often the student must report to Research and Innovation;
   e. what other CDU support services the student should access (if any); and
   f. any skills development training.

Contact with the university

(43) HDR candidates are required to maintain regular contact with their supervisors, faculty and respond to requests from Research and Innovation.

(44) If an HDR student has had no contact with any of the above for greater than three months, notwithstanding approved leave, and Research and Innovation have attempted to communicate with the student via the email and phone number provided to CDU by the student, the Dean of Graduate Studies may ask the student to show cause as to why their enrolment should be maintained.

Training throughout the candidature

Minimum training

(45) The Confirmation of Enrolment Letter to Candidates will specify:

    a. the minimum training that candidates must complete; and

    b. any training that must be completed before the confirmation of candidature.

(46) 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; and

    b. training in research, personal, and career skills.

(47) 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

(48) 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.

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

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(50) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct – Staff 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 2022 and the Code of Conduct – Students.

(51) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Code of Conduct – Staff and Code of Conduct - Students.

(52) 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.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the Governance Document Library for the latest version.

Page 6 of 7

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	14th September 2023
Review Date	14th September 2026
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	14th September 2023
Expiry Date	6th November 2023
Responsible Executive	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation +61 8 89466890
Implementation Officer	Steven Greenland Dean of Graduate Studies
Enquiries Contact	Steven Greenland Dean of Graduate Studies Research and Innovation

Glossary Terms and Definitions

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

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the Governance Document Library for the latest version.

Page 7 of 7