Higher Degree by Research Policy

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) This policy is intended to serve as an overarching framework to manage the higher degree by research (HDR) courses at the University. This policy integrates other procedures around the admission, enrolment, support, training, supervision, appraisal, and examination of HDR candidates.

(3) The practices and principles that underpin this framework policy are consistent with obligations within the Australian Qualifications Framework and the Higher Education Standards Framework as well as compatible with the Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles.

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 - Policy

Admissions and Enrolment

(5) To be admitted into an HDR course:

a. applicants must demonstrate they have the capabilities to complete research at the corresponding Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level; and
b. the university must be able to supply the resources, support and supervision to enable applicants to complete the proposed research.

(6) Admission into an HDR course is governed by the Higher Degree by Research - Admission and Enrolment Procedure.

(7) To be enrolled into a HDR course:

a. candidates must have organised one Principal Supervisor and at least one Associate Supervisor in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Supervision Procedure; and
b. candidates must be allocated to a Faculty or to the Menzies School of Health (Home Faculty), usually the Faculty of their principal supervisor.

(8) Candidates allocated to the Menzies School of Health must comply with the policies and procedures of both the University and specific to the Menzies School of Health. In certain circumstances these candidates should follow the policies and procedures of the Menzies School of Health over those of the University, some of which are noted in this policy.

(9) Each year, Research and Innovation will prompt candidates to enrol or re-enrol into the course.

(10) A candidate can transfer to another Home Faculty if approved by this Home Faculty and if beneficial to the candidate. This change could be deemed as beneficial if the resources, practices, and priorities of this Home Faculty closely match the needs of this candidate.

(11) If candidates are not enrolled and have not arranged an approved leave of absence, their candidature will lapse and they they will be invited to show cause as to why they should be permitted to maintain their enrolment.

(12) Candidates may change some details of their enrolment throughout their course. For example, domestic candidates may change their study to part-time, or a course may be deferred for a period of time. The process for changing enrolment details is covered by the Higher Degree by Research - Admission and Enrolment Procedure.

(13) Candidates must notify Research and Innovation whenever they change their name, citizenship, residency or travel overseas.

(14) During some or all their candidature, candidates may study externally, in which they are located away from the university campus. These arrangements must comply with the Higher Degree by Research - Admission and Enrolment Procedure.

(15) Candidates may also request to conduct fieldwork overseas. To be successful, this request must be:

a. endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and Home Faculty;
b. approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies;
c. consistent with student visa conditions, as advised by CDU Global; and
d. consistent with the University's Travel Policy or the Menzies Travel Policy and Procedure (as applicable).

(16) The maximum period for overseas fieldwork is 12 months for PhD candidates and 6 months for Masters by Research candidates.

Duration of Candidature

(17) The duration of a candidature is between one and two years full time for a Masters by Research and two to four years full time for a PhD. The duration of candidature includes enrolment in previous HDR courses unless:

a. the previous HDR course was completed and awarded; or
b. the previous HDR course was not completed in Australia.

(18) In exceptional circumstances, the Research Committee can approve further extensions to candidature providing:

a. candidates can demonstrate they have completed more than two thirds of their research project; or
b. candidates have completed an internship during the first 18 months of their candidature.

(19) Extensions to candidature duration will incur further tuition fees.

Leave Entitlements

(20) Candidates are entitled to up to ten days of sick leave annually. Candidates my apply for further sick leave from

their Home Faculty if they can provide medical certificates.

(21) Candidates are also entitled to leave because of jury duty or leave because of a documented case of domestic violence.

(22) Sick leave, jury leave, or leave because of domestic violence that exceeds one month can extend the date at which the candidature expires.

(23) Candidates are encouraged to arrange 20 days of annual recreation leave if full time and 10 days of annual recreation leave if part time. This annual leave entitlement, however, does not affect the date at which the candidature expires.

(24) If candidates are a primary carer of a newborn or newly adopted child, or a mother who is due give birth within 20 weeks, they are eligible to apply for parental leave. Parental leave allows a candidate to suspend their enrolment for up to 12 months.

(25) Candidates may apply for a leave of absence, which is a temporary suspension of enrolment. A leave of absence must be less than one year full time in total, across the candidature, excluding parental leave.

(26) A request for a leave of absence must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(27) In exceptional circumstances, candidates may receive a leave of absence that exceeds one year if approved by the Research Committee. When candidates are granted a leave of absence, they can still:

a. access their computer account and the library;
b. access their office space to progress their research, with the approval from their Home Faculty;
c. receive supervision, if their supervisor agrees; and
d. analyse data, but not collect data on humans or animals.

(28) The conditions of student visas usually prohibit leave of absences granted to international candidates, except in compassionate or other compelling circumstances. CDU Global will need to approve these requests from international candidates.

Time Commitments

(29) Candidates should dedicate an average of about 40 hours a week to their course if full time and 20 hours a week if part time.

(30) Candidates must seek approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies to be employed or to study another course or unit.

(31) Full-time candidates may be employed up to a maximum of 15 hours per week and part-time candidates up to 30 hours per week. However, it is preferred that full-time and part-time candidates be employed no more than five hours and 20 hours per week respectively.

(32) International candidates must confirm their eligibility to work under the conditions of their immigration visa with the Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs.

Confirmation of Candidature

(33) Until candidates complete their confirmation of candidature, they are admitted on a probationary basis. To complete the confirmation of candidature, candidates must:

a. develop a supervision agreement in cooperation with their supervisor that stipulates the responsibilities of each party;
b. submit an extensive research proposal that reviews the literature, delineate the research questions and methods, discusses the risks, and presents a timeline and budget; and
c. complete an oral presentation to a confirmation panel.

(34) The Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure stipulate:

a. if and when this confirmation of candidature must be completed;
b. the criteria that candidates must fulfill;
c. the roles of supervisors, Faculties, and Research and Innovation; and
d. the possible outcomes of this confirmation of candidature.

(35) The research that candidates plan to conduct and report in their research must be completed while they are enrolled at the University or at another Australian university. The Dean of Graduate Studies may approve exceptions on the condition that:

a. less than one third of this research was completed before the candidates were enrolled at an Australian university; and
b. the candidates received supervision of a similar standard to that provided at CDU.

(36) During the confirmation of candidature, candidates stipulate the budget they need to complete their research. If their candidature is confirmed, the Faculty or equivalent agrees to supply this budget but are not obliged to pay expenses that exceed this budget. This budget should include the costs of:

a. equipment, consumables, stationary, and software that is not available in the University;
b. courses, conferences, and travel—including occasions in which external students travel to the University; and
c. other expenses, such as editorial services or research participants.

(37) Candidates who have completed a confirmation of candidature at another Australian university or in another HDR course at this University may not need to complete the research proposal or oral presentation again, provided they submit their Supervision Agreement. The Dean of Graduate Studies can waive the research proposal or oral presentation, after consulting the Home Faculty, if:

a. the candidates can supply a research proposal they had submitted during their confirmation of candidature;
b. this research proposal is comparable in length, scope, and quality as the research proposals that candidates tend to submit at this University;
c. the research plans of these candidates have not changed substantially since their previous confirmation of candidature;
d. the university can supply the resources the candidate needs to complete the project within the allocated budget;
e. the proposed research is sufficiently extensive but still feasible within the allocated time; and
f. the supervisors have the expertise that is necessary to help the candidate complete this project.

Supervision, Training and Support

(38) All candidates must be assigned one principal supervisor and at least one associate supervisor during their entire candidature. This panel can also include other advisors, such as industry experts. The Higher Degree by Research - Supervision Procedure stipulates the:

a. criteria that staff must fulfill to register as supervisors;
b. responsibilities of these supervisors;
c. criteria of acceptable supervision panels; and
d. procedures around changes to the supervision panel.

(39) At least one academic in each Home Faculty will be assume the role of HDR coordinator. Throughout the candidature, the HDR coordinator:

a. determines whether a research project is feasible and monitors progress over time;
b. helps candidates develop the requisite career, personal, and research capabilities;
c. sensitively addresses any challenges of candidates that supervisors cannot resolve; and
d. assists supervisors who are experiencing challenges with particular candidates.

(40) The HDR coordinator may delegate some of these responsibilities to other academics in the Home Faculty. If candidates feel their Home Faculty cannot resolve their concerns, Research and Innovation and the Dean of Graduate Studies may address administrative and academic matters respectively.

(41) Candidates must participate in training and development opportunities to extend their research, personal, and career skills in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure. These opportunities may include:

a. workshops, conferences, and other events organised by the University or other entities; and
b. informal opportunities, such as peer discussions and website materials.

(42) Some training activities are compulsory, including induction training and research integrity training.

(43) The Faculty or equivalent must provide the resources and services outlined in the Higher Degree by Research - Minimum Resources Procedure.

(44) Candidates must comply with the University Work Health and Safety Policy or the Menzies Health and Safety Policy as applicable. Supervisors and Home Faculties must:

a. advise candidates on safety practices that are specific to their research activities;
b. foster a culture that promotes health, safety, and compliance; and
c. report incidents and hazards to Health, Safety and Environment.

(45) Candidates must comply with the University Travel Policy whenever they undertake travel associated with their research project and research training, including attending conferences and workshops. Candidates with the Menzies School of Health must comply with the Menzies Travel Policy and Menzies Travel Health and Safety Policy.

(46) If candidates feel that one of their concerns was not addressed adequately, they can submit a complaint or grievance. Applicants and candidates may also appeal academic decisions that affect their standing or rights—but on procedural grounds only. Complaints, grievances, and appeals should be lodged in accordance with the Students – Academic Grievance Procedures.

Responsible Conduct of Research

(47) Candidates must comply with the codes and policies that are stipulated in the Responsible Conduct of Research Policy or the Menzies Responsible Research Policy as applicable. Before candidates may start their research activity, they need to seek and maintain clearance from:

a. the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University if their research involves human participants, as defined by the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research;
b. the Animal Ethics Committee at the University if their research involves animals; or
c. the Top End Human Research Ethics Committee for candidates with the Menzies School of Health.

(48) The University has appointed Research Integrity Advisors within each Home Faculty to guide and advise staff and candidates on responsible research practices. The Research Misconduct Allegation Procedures details how staff or students can submit an allegation of research misconduct.

Changes During Candidature

(49) Candidates may change their research plans during their candidature, such as the research question, methodology, or methods. Depending on the magnitude of these changes, candidates may need to seek approval from various bodies, such as the ethics committee, in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure.

(50) If endorsed by the Home Faculty, a PhD candidate may apply to transfer their candidature to a Masters by Research either for personal reasons or because this change was recommended by their supervision panel or HDR coordinator, usually as a consequence of inadequate progress.

(51) The Dean of Graduate Studies may approve this request, especially if the candidate is significantly more likely to complete the Masters by Research, but not the PhD, on time. The date of commencement in the Masters by Research will be backdated to the date the candidate enrolled in the PhD.

(52) If endorsed by the Home Faculty, a Masters by Research candidate may apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies to upgrade their candidature to a PhD. The eligibility of a candidate to enrol in a PhD is stipulated in Helping candidates upgrade to a PhD. If the application is approved, the maximum candidature date will be adjusted accordingly. Candidates will also need to demonstrate that:

a. they have completed a research plan that is feasible and appropriate to a PhD;
b. the University can supply the resources, support, and supervision to support this PhD; and
c. the research project can be completed within the maximum duration of the candidature.

(53) International candidates must confirm their eligibility to change their research or enrolment conditions with the Department of Home Affairs. In addition, candidates from a sanctioned nation must receive approval from CDU Global to change their research topic.

Issues with Progression

(54) To maintain candidature, candidates must fulfill imposed milestones, including progress reviews, during their candidature.

(55) If candidates fail to complete a milestone in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure, their Home Faculty may impose a period of probation with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. When a probationary period is imposed, the candidates, with the guidance and support of their supervision panel and Home Faculty, must:

a. within a month FTE, devise a revised plan on the activities they will complete to finish their research; and
b. specify how they will manage the past or potential impediments to their progress.

(56) If candidates do not complete this revised plan on time or do not progress adequately over the next 6 months FTE they may be invited to show cause as to why they should be permitted to maintain their enrolment. Once candidates

demonstrate adequate progress, the Dean of Graduate Studies may remove the probation.

(57) If candidates engage in misconduct, they will be invited to show cause as to why they should be permitted to maintain their enrolment. Misconduct includes breaches of the University's Codes of Conduct and the Menzies Code of Conduct if applicable.

(58) A show cause notice will be issued only after all reasonable attempts to assist the candidate. If the Dean of Graduate Studies issues a show cause notice, candidates must respond to Research and Innovation within four weeks in writing. Candidates can also choose to meet relevant staff members to discuss their case. Usually, the attendees will include:

a. the Dean of Graduate Studies;
b. the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or delegate of the Home Faculty;
c. the Principal Supervisor;
d. a relevant staff member of Research and Innovation; and
e. a support person, chosen by the candidate.

(59) The Research Committee will then consider this response to decide whether to:

a. exclude the candidate;
b. invite the candidate, if enrolled in a PhD, to enrol in a Masters by Research instead; or
c. permit the candidate to continue, subject to specified conditions, such as engagement with support services or adjustments to milestones, that must include probation.

(60) Any notice of exclusion will be issued by the Research Committee and sent to the candidate. The notice will summarise the reasons for the decision and inform the candidate that they can appeal to the Student Appeals Committee. If the candidate does not initiate an appeal within twenty working days the University will action the exclusion.

(61) If candidates lodge an appeal while enrolled, they will remain enrolled until the appeal has been resolved. If an appeal is unsuccessful, the exclusion will begin from the date of this decision.

(62) The University must notify the relevant government authority of the updated enrolment status if the candidate is an international student.

(63) If a candidate wishes to withdraw from their course, they should notify their principal supervisor and Home Faculty and submit the Withdrawal Form as soon as possible.

(64) If the candidate delays their withdrawal, they may be granted less time to complete another HDR course in future. Candidates may withdraw at any time except while their research is under examination. To prevent potential complications around student visas and tuition fees, international candidates must discuss their intention to withdraw from candidature with CDU Global.

Submission, Examination and Conferral

(65) The University must arrange at least two examiners to evaluate the thesis. The Higher Degree by Research - Preparation, Submission and Examinations Procedure stipulates:

a. the length, format, and contents of theses;
b. when and how candidates can submit their thesis;
c. editing of theses;

d. who can examine a thesis;
e. evaluation of theses; and
f. responses to evaluations.

(66) During a candidature, tuition, oral presentations, and written submissions will be conducted in English, unless the Research Committee has approved exceptions. To approve these exceptions, the Research Committee will consider whether:

a. the milestones can be evaluated accurately, in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Progression Procedure;
b. the candidate can receive adequate support and supervision; and
c. the thesis can be examined, in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research - Preparation, Submission and Examinations Procedure.

(67) If these exceptions are granted, the candidate must submit an abstract as well as an outline of this thesis of approximately 2500 words to the satisfaction of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

(68) When a candidate completes the requirements of a PhD or Masters by Research, Council shall award the qualification. To complete the requirements of a research degree, candidates must:

a. achieve a pass in the examination of their thesis;
b. fulfill the milestones and training requirements that are stipulated in the letter of offer; and
c. supply an electronic copy of the final thesis to the University repository.

Authority to Change Courses

(69) Research and Innovation, alongside the Faculties and the Menzies School of Research, administer the HDR courses at the University on behalf of the Research Committee. Decisions regarding HDR admission, enrolment, progression, supervision, examination, and completion are not deemed to be final until notification is received from Research and Innovation.

(70) Establishing and managing a Joint PhD Program, Dual PhD Program, or other collaborative arrangements shall comply with the Higher Degree by Research - Collaborative Course Policy.

(71) If a research degree course is terminated or suspended, arrangements for managing existing candidates must be clearly documented and disseminated to all these candidates. As far as possible, this termination or suspension of the course should not disadvantage existing candidates.

(72) Candidates can continue to enrol in the course until all existing students have completed the course, transitioned, or withdrawn, or for a period that is twice the duration of the full-time maximum period of candidature, whichever is shorter.

Section 5 - Non-compliance

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

(74) 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.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection +61 8 89466890
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. 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.