

Code of Practice for Research Higher Degree Candidates

Introduction

For the purpose of this code an academic unit may encompass a school, a discipline or a centre, depending on the organisational structure of the Faculty.

The aim of research supervision is to engender in the candidate the ability to carry out research culminating in a thesis, as defined within the Faculty, which makes an original contribution to the field of study.

The principal purpose of the code of practice is to ensure that supervisors, their respective academic units and Faculties, and the candidates, are aware and clear about their minimum responsibilities, the responsibilities of each other and of the University. The University acknowledges that research candidates have a right to effective supervision. However, candidates do have responsibilities to adhere to the University's rules, to be proactive in completing all components of their research and thesis, to maintain progress and to communicate with their supervisors. As part of the enrolment process, candidates and the University are required to acknowledge and accept that the following clauses describe the respective rights and responsibilities of both parties and form the basis of understanding and commitment between them.

Whilst functions, responsibilities and the relationship between supervisors and candidate will vary according to the research discipline, especially with regard to the provision of physical resources, the fundamental principles outlined in the following sections apply to all Faculties, academic units, supervisors and candidates. Additional and more specific guidelines produced by each Faculty/academic unit are distributed to its research higher degree candidates at induction sessions.

A. Responsibilities at Institutional Level

The University will ensure that policies relating to research higher degree candidature are developed, implemented and monitored to ensure that:

- (i) where required, candidates have access to appropriate tuition in English language, report writing, computing, word processing, statistical methodology and information retrieval;
- (ii) the intellectual property rights of all parties are clearly stated;
- (iii) there is adherence to the University's standards for admission and requirements for progress in the particular degree;
- (iv) there is reasonable access to physical facilities and research resources appropriate to the field of study;

- (v) adequate and accurate information is provided prior to enrolment;
- (vi) an informative induction process is available which candidates are required to undertake;
- (vii) there are progress reporting requirements which enable the views of both staff and candidates to be adequately represented;
- (viii) there are grievance procedures by which either the candidate or the supervisor may make representations as appropriate (and if necessary in confidence) if significant difficulties arise;
- (ix) all supervisors are aware of the necessity to implement the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and are aware, where applicable, of the working procedures of the ethics committees;
- (x) provision is made for staff development of supervisors and potential supervisors;
- (xi) there are appeals procedures setting out the grounds on which, and means whereby, candidates may appeal against evaluation of their candidature, and the conduct and outcome of the examination;
- (xii) there are clear guidelines for examiners/adjudicators on the institution's expectations for the degree;
- (xiii) the University's administrative procedures assist candidates to complete their degrees as expeditiously as possible within the regulations;
- (xiv) positive academic cultures are promoted within the academic units which are for the benefit of research candidates and which ensure that research candidates are perceived as members of the academic units;
- (xv) the level of resources provided to candidates is monitored in the following ways:
 - as part of the Confirmation process undertaken by all students at the end of 12 months of full-time equivalent candidature, which will require them to state what resources they have so far received and what resources they still need to carry out their project;
 - the progress reports.
- (xvi) provision is made for candidate representation on the Research Training Sub-Committee.

B. Responsibilities at the Faculty / Academic Unit Level

It is the responsibility of the Faculty / academic unit to ensure that:

- (i) the likelihood of a candidate's success in the pursuit of a higher degree is enhanced by selection and admission procedures which include monitoring that:
 - a) the applicant is qualified for admission to candidature;
 - b) the applicant appears to have the capacity required to undertake the program successfully and in a reasonable time;
 - c) the research project proposed is appropriate in level and scope for the degree;
 - d) the project is feasible in terms of facilities, equipment, technical and resource staff, source materials and funding for the expected duration of the research required for the research higher degree candidature;
 - e) due recognition is given to the research interests and ability of the applicant and that consultation occurs in determining the project;
 - f) information is available to prospective candidates about the research interests and academic experience of all staff in the academic unit, and where appropriate, a list of available research areas likely to support a research candidate;

- (ii) appropriate supervision is available to the candidate at all times and that:
 - a) the candidate has a minimum of two supervisors, a Principal Supervisor and a co-supervisor, unless on the recommendation of the Head of School and Assistant Dean (Research Training), the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies has been obtained for the student to have only one supervisor;
 - b) the principal supervisor is properly expert and interested in the area of research, and has sufficient experience in recent supervision, to offer the candidate adequate supervision;
 - c) any co-supervisor has a minimum of ten per cent of the supervision load for the candidate;
 - d) the principal supervisor is not a candidate for a research degree, unless approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies;
 - e) either the principal or the co-supervisor has attained a research degree at a level equivalent to or higher than the level of the degree being supervised, or has a combination of qualifications and research attainments at least equivalent to that level;
 - f) the number of candidates assigned to a supervisor is strictly monitored by the Assistant Dean (Research Training) and does not exceed the equivalent of five full-time research higher degree candidates, without the approval of the Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee;
 - g) no supervisor is appointed as principal supervisor unless they have previously supervised a research higher degree candidate through to successful completion, except with the

- approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies, on the recommendation of the Head of School and Assistant Dean (Research Training);
- h) the workload of supervisors is such as to allow sufficient time for the adequate supervision of the candidate, and the allocation of supervisors has taken into consideration any Honours students being supervised, as well as teaching load and other obligations;
 - i) where the progress of a candidate who has only one supervisor is considered unsatisfactory, a co-supervisor is appointed by the Assistant Dean (Research Training);
 - j) Unsatisfactory progress or delays are reported and addressed promptly and appropriately (e.g. applying intervention strategies)
 - k) if the principal supervisor is to be temporarily absent in excess of a period of four weeks, an alternative supervisor is appointed prior to the supervisor's absence;
 - l) if the principal or sole supervisor leaves the university, the Head of School takes responsibility for ensuring that a candidate's research program can be sustained;
- (iii) written information is produced and distributed to all research candidates by the Faculty or academic unit with details on requirements and procedures relating to matters such as:
- a) facilities and resources available, in general, to all research candidates within the academic unit and within the University (e.g. library, computing and technical facilities, word-processing training, statistical advice, English language tuition);
 - b) guidelines on authorship and intellectual property and the procedures for monitoring adherence to them within the academic unit consistent with University policy;
 - c) academic unit/Faculty policy on the timing and mode of presentation of reports by which a candidate's academic progress is assessed;
 - d) grievance procedures, whereby candidates may make representation to the Head of academic unit, appropriate officer and/or academic unit/Faculty committee or University committee, if they believe that their work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons beyond their control, especially in situations involving problems of supervision or unresolved conflicts between candidates and supervisors;
- (iv) an academic staff member within an academic unit is appointed to monitor the general progress and welfare of research candidates. It is recommended that the Head of the academic unit not be appointed to this role, in order to provide the candidate with an alternative pathway for consultation;
- (v) confirmation committees are established to assess the performance of the candidate against the compulsory hurdles required to be completed within twelve months of the commencement of candidature on a full-time basis, or part-time equivalent;

- (vi) clear milestones are set for the remainder of candidature following the initial twelve-month hurdles, by consultation between the candidate and the supervisory team, to ensure completion of the thesis by the end of the prescribed period;
- (vii) a research candidate is elected as a representative to the board of the academic unit;
- (viii) mechanisms are in place to promote regular consultation, interaction and development of productive intellectual relationships between academic unit staff and candidates, including, but not limited to:
 - a) orientation programs at the Faculty and/or academic unit level for research candidates and their supervisors, to clarify procedures, give advice and discuss the expectations of candidates and staff (for example with regard to the timing and presentation of progress reports, access to facilities and resources, and guidelines on appeals procedures at academic unit and Faculty level);
 - b) seminars on research procedures relevant to postgraduate-level research;
 - c) guidance on matters relating to authorship of publications, ownership of intellectual property, exploitation of inventions, archiving of data;
 - d) a regular program of seminars delivered by research candidates in the academic unit's research areas;
 - e) training workshops in occupational health and safety procedures, environmental protection and any technical matters relevant to the discipline area;
 - f) where appropriate, seminars or training in ethical issues and procedures;
 - g) seminars and courses to provide information and skills development;
 - h) opportunities for all candidates to participate in the intellectual and social life of the academic unit;
- (ix) research candidates are encouraged to make submissions regarding the provision of adequate human and physical resources within the academic unit;
- (x) the following minimum level of resources is provided to each full-time, on-campus research higher degree candidate:
 - a desk and chair and dedicated workspace
 - a lockable filing cabinet or cupboard
 - access to a photocopier on an appropriate* basis
 - access to office facilities for the transmission and receipt of official telephone and facsimile messages and mail
 - appropriate* access to computer facilities and software programs, and training to use such programs, as may be necessary for research and thesis preparation
 - where necessary, appropriate* laboratory facilities (including consumables) and bench space

- adequate library access and free access through inter-library loans.

(* appropriate means sufficient so that progress on the research project is not impinged.)

- (xi) part-time, on-campus candidates are provided with the same minimum level of resources as full-time students, except that access to a desk, chair, dedicated workspace and a lockable filing cabinet may need to be on a shared basis;
- (xii) for external candidates, the level of resources to be provided is agreed between the candidate and the Faculty and documented at the time of enrolment or upon approval of off-campus enrolment;
- (xiii) where by prior arrangement a candidate is conducting the majority of his or her research away from the University, that steps are taken to ensure the candidate is given the opportunity to have as active a role as circumstances permit in the intellectual life of the academic unit;
- (xiv) the candidate's research program is not unduly influenced or redirected by political or commercial or industrial factors.

C. Responsibilities of Supervisors^[1]

It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that the role model they provide to candidates encourages a research culture of excellence, integrity, professionalism and mutual respect, to maintain a professional relationship at all times with the candidate and to:

- (i) at the commencement of candidature provide guidance about the nature of research and the standard of performance expected, about the choice of research topic, about the planning of the research program and presentation of a research proposal, about literature and sources, attendance at taught classes where appropriate and about appropriate research methodologies and requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary e.g. computer analysis, statistics);
- (ii) be particularly sensitive to the need to ensure appropriate and productive use of the candidate's time, especially in the first year of candidature. It is important to ensure an effective start to candidature and to subsequently ensure that the candidate is engaged in a program of study that will produce sufficient results within the prescribed period ;
- (iii) provide detailed advice on necessary completion dates of successive stages of work so that the thesis may be submitted within the scheduled time;

[1]Supervision will normally be carried out by a supervisory panel of at least two members. The duties listed will need to be shared between the person designated as principal supervisor and the co-supervisor(s), with the principal supervisor normally undertaking the bulk of the duties.

- (iv) encourage the candidate to show initiative and self-motivation so that the candidate will be able to pursue independent research with confidence, particularly in the final stages of candidature;
- (v) establish and maintain a schedule of regular (ordinarily at least monthly) contact with the candidate in accordance with Faculty/academic unit policy and in the light of discussion of arrangements with the candidate;
- (vi) advise the candidate of any expected absence and the alternative arrangements to be implemented for supervision during that absence;
- (vii) recognise the importance of the candidate providing regular written work, interim reports or research results as appropriate and to return such work, including the final draft of the thesis, with appropriate criticism, ordinarily within one month of receipt;
- (viii) ensure that where a change in research direction occurs, appropriate supervisory adjustments are negotiated and that, where necessary, adjustments are made to the period of candidature;
- (ix) ensure that the candidate is adequately trained in safe working practices relevant to the particular field of research and encourage adherence to the guidelines established by the University Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee;
- (x) ensure that the candidate is aware of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and, in particular, of the need to follow ethical practices appropriate to the particular discipline and any relevant profession;
- (xi) advise the candidate of appropriate ethical practices and where required, supervise and endorse an application for clearance to the University and any other appropriate ethics committee. Ensure that where approval is required that it is sought before the research commences and that the research is conducted in accordance with the terms of the approval of the ethics committee(s);
- (xii) arrange for an annual presentation (or more frequently if appropriate) by candidates of their research work to academic unit and/or Faculty forums;

- (xiii) facilitate meetings of the candidate with other researchers, industry and community groups in the relevant field, and attendance at conferences, as appropriate (within the limits of resources available to the academic unit);
- (xiv) encourage the candidate to play a full and active role in the intellectual life of the academic unit. This is particularly important in the case of part-time candidates and also for those candidates whose major work is being conducted away from the University academic unit or in a joint project with a commercial or industrial partner;
- (xv) ensure that the work reported in the research thesis is the candidate's own, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis, and that any editorial assistance in the writing of the thesis is appropriately acknowledged;
- (xvi) ensure that, in accordance with University policies, the direction of the work is under the control of the University of Newcastle and the candidate;
- (xvii) strongly encourage, wherever appropriate, the publication of the results of the research;
- (xviii) assist candidates in developing the necessary skills for peer review and to understand their obligation to participate in peer reviews.
- (xiv) ensure that agreement is reached with the candidate concerning authorship of publications and acknowledgment of relative contributions during and after candidature. There should be open and mutual recognition of the candidate's and supervisor's contributions on all published work arising from the project. It should not be automatically assumed that the supervisor's name (or candidate's name) will appear on all such published work. It should be recognised that the supervisors and the University make a major contribution to the candidate's progress;

Note: the minimum requirement for authorship should accord with the protocol set out in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy.

- (xix) ensure adherence to University policy and guidelines on intellectual property;
- (xx) ensure that the candidate is made aware of inadequate progress by specifying the problems and suggesting ways of addressing them;
- (xxi) report regularly in writing, as required by the University, on the candidate's progress to the Head of the academic unit and to the Research Training Sub-Committee.
- (xxii) be satisfied that the research methods and outcomes of the candidate are appropriate and valid and to report any concerns to the appropriate authority;

- (xxiii) advise the Head of academic unit or Pro Vice-Chancellor of Faculty (or nominee) of the names of possible appropriately qualified examiners. The candidate may advise the supervisor and the Head of the academic unit of names of persons who may be appropriate or who should not be contacted. Such advice must be received by the Office of Graduate Studies at least two months prior to the submission of the research thesis;
- (xxiv) ensure that the names of the examiners are not disclosed to the candidate prior to the submission of the thesis, nor released after the examination process is completed unless the examiner(s) specifically approves the release of their identity.
- (xxv) provide a report at the time of the candidate's thesis submission on the merit of the thesis.
- (xxvi) ensure that original data are recorded in a retrievable, durable and appropriately referenced form and stored safely for a period appropriate to the discipline, but in any case not less than five years. This must be done in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and academic unit policy, and where appropriate will include the lodging of datasets with national data archives;
- (xxvii) undertake supervisor accreditation or training if requested to do so by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

D. Responsibilities of Candidates

Research candidates must understand that in undertaking research training they are participating in an endeavour that requires dedication and accountability. In accepting an offer of admission, a candidate agrees to comply with the rules, policies and by-laws of the University. It is the responsibility of candidates to maintain a professional relationship at all times with the supervisors and other University staff and to:

- (i) be familiar with the responsibilities of the various parties involved in their study towards their award, their rights as a candidate, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy, the University's regulations relating to research candidature and academic integrity, the *Research Higher Degrees Candidate's Guide* and any other material provided by the academic unit, the Faculty or the University;
- (ii) play an informed part in the process of the selection and appointment of their supervisors ;

- (iii) attend the central induction session and/or undertake the online induction process and attend any compulsory Faculty and/or School induction sessions at the commencement of candidature;
- (iv) utilise the resources, facilities and opportunities available to facilitate progress in the research, and where any additional resource or facility is required, to discuss these requirements with the supervisors for assistance in resolution;
- (v) contribute to the development of the intellectual community provided by the academic unit, including attendance at any seminar series conducted by the School or academic unit;
- (vi) acquire or improve the skills and knowledge required for the completion of the research project;
- (vii) satisfy the following requirements within twelve months of commencement of candidature on a full-time basis (or part-time equivalent):
 - a) The provision of a written document containing at least:
 - o a critical review of recent work in the field
 - o an updated research proposal
 - o an updated plan of research
 - o an updated timetable for completion of the thesis
 - o a comprehensive statement of the resources required to complete the project within the funded period
 - b) The provision of an oral presentation to a confirmation committee
 - c) The provision of a verbal defence of the research proposal before a confirmation committee.
- (viii) be aware of opportunities for meeting other researchers in the field and attend seminars, meetings and conferences, as appropriate;
- (ix) present a research paper at a Faculty or School-based seminar annually;
- (x) adopt, at all times, safe working practices relevant to the field of research and adhere to the guidelines established by the University Occupational Health and Safety Committee;
- (xi) adhere to the ethical practices in research as required by the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy.

- (xii) follow ethical practices which are appropriate to the particular discipline and relevant profession, and as specified by the University Human Research Ethics Committee, Animal Care and Ethics Committee, and the ethical guidelines set down by any relevant government or funding body;
- (xiii) ensure that all original data are recorded in a retrievable, durable and appropriately referenced form and are made available to the supervisors at any time during candidature. Ensure that all original data are stored safely in the academic unit for a period appropriate to the discipline in accordance with academic unit and University policy, in particular the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy, but in any case not less than five years;
- (xiv) initiate discussions at the commencement of candidature with the supervisor and any co-supervisor(s) on the type of guidance and comments which are considered most helpful, and agree and adhere to a schedule of meetings which will ensure regular contact. These arrangements may need to be renegotiated as candidature progresses;
- (xv) develop, in consultation with the supervisors, the research plan and timeline for completion of the various stages of the research project;
- (xvi) in the case of off-campus students, attend the campus at least once each year for discussions with the supervisors;
- (xvii) take the initiative in raising problems, difficulties or delays relating to candidature and seek to resolve those problems;
- (xviii) be aware of the mechanisms that exist for resolving supervisor – candidate difficulties and to take advantage of them if necessary. Candidates have a personal responsibility to take the initiative when necessary to seek a change of supervisor;
- (xix) be aware of University grievance procedures, and seek negotiated solutions to any problems before recourse to those procedures;
- (xx) maintain continuous enrolment apart from approved periods of leave and apply themselves diligently to their research, make every effort to make satisfactory academic progress with the research project and aim to complete the program within the expected timeframe.
- (xxi) document the progress of the work as agreed with the supervisors, and present written or other material for comment and discussion in a timely manner that allows for continuity of the research program;

- (xxii) advise the supervisors of any significant factors which may affect their progress and initiate any variations to candidature as required;
- (xxiii) provide progress reports to the Research Training Sub-Committee, and other reports as required;
- (xxiv) prepare the thesis for examination in the format prescribed in the Thesis Preparation and Submission Guidelines, including making the required thesis declaration.
- (xxv) advise the Office of Graduate Studies two months prior to the intended submission date;
- (xxvi) make any required amendments to the thesis after examination within the specified timeframe.
- (xxvii) access 'studentmail' as a regular means of maintaining communication with the University.

Further references

[Office of Graduate Studies – Research Higher Degrees](#)

[Research Higher Degrees Candidates Guide](#)

[Intellectual Property Policy](#)

[Intellectual Property Procedure](#)

[Animal Ethics](#)

[Human Ethics](#)

[Rules Governing Research Higher Degrees](#)

[Doctor of Philosophy Schedule](#)

[Master of Philosophy Schedule](#)

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

[Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#)

[Grievance Procedures](#)

[Policy Library](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#)

Approved under delegated authority by:
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