Higher Degree by Research Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy prescribes the following for Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) programs at the University of Newcastle (University):

a. HDR program development and management requirements;
b. provisions for admission, transfers, and enrolment into HDR programs;
c. HDR candidate progression requirements;
d. requirements for the award of a HDR qualification, including thesis and examination requirements;
e. compliance requirements; and
f. penalties for non-compliance.

(2) This Policy must be read in conjunction with the following documents:

a. Higher Degrees by Research Procedure;
b. Responsible Conduct of Research Policy;
c. Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature;
d. Disclosure of Interest Policy;
e. Doctoral Degree (Research) Awards and Program Schedule;
f. Masters Degree (Research) - Awards and Programs Schedule;
g. Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degrees and Dual Award Doctoral Degrees Policy;
h. Research Thesis with a Creative Component Procedure;
i. Research Authorship Procedure;
j. Awards and Graduation Policy; and
k. Confirmation of Candidature Guidelines.

Section 2 - Audience

(3) This policy should be read and understood by:

a. applicants seeking admission into a HDR program;
b. candidates enrolled in HDR programs; and
c. staff responsible for the development, administration, management and supervision of HDR programs, candidates and applicants.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This Policy applies to HDR awards and programs created, established, and offered by the University.

(5) The HDR awards offered at the University are:

a. Masters Degree (Research) (AQF Level 9) (see Masters Degree (Research) Awards and Program Schedule);
b. Doctoral Degree (Research) (AQF Level 10) (See Doctoral Degree (Research) Awards and Program Schedule);
c. Doctoral Degree (Research) in Clinical Psychology (AQF Level 10) (See Doctoral Degree (Research) in Clinical Psychology – Awards and Programs Schedule); and
d. Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication (AQF Level 10) (See Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication – Awards and Programs Schedule).

Section 4 - Definitions

(6) In the context of this document, the following definitions apply:

a. "compassionate and compelling circumstances" for international HDR candidates include:
    i. serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student was unable to study;
    ii. bereavement of close family members such as parents or grandparents (where possible, a death certificate should be provided);
    iii. major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel and this has impacted on the student's studies; or
    iv. a traumatic experience which could include:
        - involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident; or
        - witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, and this has impacted on the student (these cases should be supported by police or psychologist's reports); or
    v. inability to begin studying on the course commencement date due to a delay in receiving a student visa;
b. "conditional offer of admission" is an offer of admission into a HDR program subject to the applicant meeting specified criteria within a set timeframe;
c. "confirmed" refers to a candidate's enrolment status where the requirements of confirmation have been met. See also "provisional candidature";
d. "domestic applicant" means an applicant seeking admission into a HDR program who is an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Humanitarian visa holder, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand);
e. "domestic HDR candidate" means a candidate who is an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Humanitarian visa holder, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand);
f. "exclusion" means the termination of a candidate's enrolment in either a course or program for a specified period of time, which may include the withdrawal of rights and privileges and the right to use, enter or be within the premises;
g. "international HDR applicant" means an applicant seeking admission into a HDR program, who is not an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand) and has a student visa, provisional residency, temporary residency, bridging visa, or any other category of non-permanent visa for Australia;
h. "international HDR candidate" means a candidate, as defined by the University, who is not an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand) and has a student visa, provisional residency, temporary residency, bridging visa, or any other category of non-permanent visa for Australia;
i. "premises" means any:
    i. premises owned, leased or otherwise used or occupied by the University;

ii. premises where research, workshops, camps, field or clinical placements, examinations and any other activities controlled or supervised by the University are conducted;
iii. premises where practical work, clinical placements, professional placements, or vocational placements that form part of a program or course offered by the University are conducted; or
iv. premises or a facility where a candidate is representing, or under the direction of, the University;

j. "principles of procedural fairness" requires that:
   i. the decision maker is impartial, and free from actual or apparent bias;
   ii. the HDR candidate whose interests will be affected by a decision receives a fair hearing, including the opportunity to respond to any adverse material that could influence the decision; and
   iii. a finding is based on evidence that is relevant and logically capable of supporting the findings made; and
k. "provisional candidature" means a candidate's enrolment status where the requirements of confirmation have not yet been met and are not yet due to be met. Provisional candidature commences immediately after admission into a HDR program.

Section 5 - Admission

(7) The University may:

a. make an offer of admission to an applicant who has met the University's admission requirements outlined below; or
b. make a conditional offer of admission to an applicant.

(8) Applicants must nominate either full-time or part-time enrolment at the time of their application. Where the viability of the research project could be impeded by part-time enrolment the University may direct a candidate to enrol on a full-time basis.

(9) A candidate whose enrolment has previously been terminated may apply for re-admission. Any application would be considered in accordance with the provisions of this Policy. Any candidate re-admitted after previous termination of candidature would not be eligible for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and will be required to recommence a new program. The University may prescribe terms and conditions to be placed on the candidate's re-admission.

(10) Nothing in this policy confers a right on a person to be admitted or imposes a duty on the University to admit, or offer to admit, a person to a HDR program.

Admission Requirements

(11) To be considered for admission to a HDR program all applicants are required to:

a. meet the relevant English language proficiency requirements as described in the English Language Proficiency Policy, and as per any additional program requirements for English language proficiency;
b. satisfy the minimum academic requirements described in the relevant Awards and Programs Schedules;
c. have the support of an academic who is registered as a Principal Supervisor at the University;
d. be a minimum of 16 years of age as at 1 March in the year of admission. Applicants under the age of 16 years may apply directly to the Vice-Chancellor (VC) for consideration of admission; and
e. meet any other additional admission requirements that may be prescribed by the School under delegated authority.

Refusal of Admission

(12) The University may refuse admission to candidature when appropriate supervision or resources are not available. Whether appropriate supervision and resources are available will be determined by the Head of School or Deputy Head of School and endorsed by the Director, Graduate Research.

(13) An applicant who has been excluded or suspended from the University or any other tertiary institution will not be admitted to any program at the University during a period of exclusion or suspension.

Deferral of Admission

(14) Table 1 outlines the options for deferment and the University's requirements and conditions.

Table 1 HDR Program Deferment Provisions and Conditions

Applicant	Deferment Period being sought	Approval Authority	Conditions / Requirements
Domestic applicants, excluding those with a grant-funded scholarship.	12 months	Head of School / Deputy Head of School	Eligibility for deferral must be stated in the Offer of Admission. Subject to endorsement by the Director, Graduate Research.
Full-fee paying international applicants, including those on a sponsorship funded scholarship.	12 months		
Domestic and international applicants on a grant-funded scholarship.	12 months		The relevant Chief Investigator must confirm that sufficient funds are available to support the candidate for the full duration of the HDR program.
International applicants who are on a University funded scholarship.	12 months	Director, Graduate Research	Subject to: a. confirmation of compassionate or compelling circumstances permissible under the ESOS Act; b. recommendation from the Principal Supervisor; c. recommendation from the Head of School or Deputy Head of School; and d. an International Sanctions Compliance assessment (please see International Sanctions Compliance Policy).

Applicant	Deferment Period being sought	Approval Authority	Conditions / Requirements
Domestic applicants, excluding those with a grant funded scholarship.	> 12 months	Director, Graduate Research	Approval is subject to: a. recommendation from the Principal Supervisor and Head of School or Deputy Head of School; b. receipt of documentation describing the details of funding or sponsorship the candidate will receive to cover the tuition fees and living expenses for the proposed duration of the HDR program (if applicable).
International applicants on a sponsorship funded scholarship scheme.	> 12 months		Approval is subject to: a. recommendation rom the Principal Supervisor and Head of School or Deputy Head of School; b. an International Sanctions Compliance Assessment (Please see International Sanctions Compliance Policy); c. receipt of documentation describing the details of funding or sponsorship the candidate will receive to cover the tuition fees and living expenses for the proposed duration of the HDR program.
International applicants who are not on a sponsorship funded scholarship scheme or University funded sponsorship.	> 12 months		Approval is subject to: a. recommendation from the Principal Supervisor and Head of School or Deputy Head of School; and b. an International Sanctions Compliance Assessment (please see International Sanctions Compliance Policy).

Withdrawal of Offer of Admission

(15) Without limitation, an applicant's offer of admission may be withdrawn by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or Director, Graduate Research if:

a. the applicant has supplied incomplete or inaccurate information with or in association with their application;
b. the applicant fails to accept their offer of admission by the date specified, or have their request for deferment approved; or
c. the appropriate supervision or resources are no longer available to support completion of the project.

Section 6 - Enrolment

(16) A candidate may only enrol at the University if they have:

a. satisfied the requirements for admission to the HDR program;
b. received and accepted a current offer of admission to the HDR program;
c. completed the prescribed enrolment procedures, including acceptance of relevant Terms and Conditions;
d. provided sufficient proof of identification; and
e. for international HDR candidates, have a valid and current visa that permits study within Australia.

(17) A candidate may only enrol in courses that conform to the requirements of their approved program, as prescribed in the relevant Awards and Program Schedule.

(18) Provisions for academic credit are outlined in the relevant Awards and Program Schedule.

(19) It is the responsibility of the candidate to be aware of the assumed knowledge requirements for a course (as outlined in the Course Handbook).

Study Load

(20) International HDR candidates are required to be enrolled on a full-time basis and must complete their course within the period indicated in their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE).

(21) Where the viability of the research project could be impeded by part-time enrolment the Director, Graduate Research is authorised to direct a candidate to maintain enrolment on a full-time basis.

(22) Scholarship recipients are required to enrol on a full-time basis unless approval is granted by the Director, Graduate Research to undertake part-time study due to extenuating circumstances.

Leave of Absence – Domestic HDR candidates

(23) A domestic HDR candidate may make a request for a leave of absence from the program for a period of no less than four weeks and up to one academic year, only after completion of one year of full-time or part-time equivalent candidature. Any request will be subject to approval from the Head of School or Deputy Head of School and must be endorsed by the Director, Graduate Research.

(24) Leave of absence after the completion of less than one year of full-time or part-time equivalent candidature, or a second consecutive leave of absence from a HDR program for a period of up to one academic year, may be considered only under compassionate and compelling circumstances. Any request will be subject to approval from the Head of School or Deputy Head of School and must be endorsed by the Director, Graduate Research.

Leave of Absence – International HDR candidates

(25) Leave of absence requests from international HDR candidates studying in Australia on a student visa may be considered only under compassionate and compelling circumstances. Any request will be subject to recommendation from the Head of School or Deputy Head of School and approval by the Director, Graduate Research.

Return from leave of absence

(26) Upon return from leave of absence a candidate must re-enrol on the same basis as previously enrolled unless a variation to their candidature has been approved.

Enforced Leave

(27) A candidate may be placed on enforced leave in accordance with the Student Conduct Rule.

Off-campus Enrolment

(28) The University's HDR programs are delivered on campus and off-campus enrolment may only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

(29) Candidates may apply for off-campus enrolment if they reside and/or work outside a 50km radius of the University campus where they are enrolled. Candidates must be able to demonstrate that off-campus enrolment will not impede their progress in any way.

(30) Off-campus enrolment is subject to approval by the relevant Head of School or Deputy Head of School and must be endorsed by the Director, Graduate Research. The request may be declined, or conditions imposed, where the viability of the research project could be impeded by off-campus enrolment.

Concurrent Enrolment

(31) A candidate (other than a Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree (JADD) or Dual Award Doctoral Degree (DADD) candidate) must declare any current higher education enrolments in their application for admission.

(32) A candidate may not be concurrently enrolled as a candidate for any other degree or award at the University or another tertiary institution, unless approved by the Director, Graduate Research.

Withdrawal from Coursework

(33) A candidate may make a request to withdraw from a coursework requisite of their program. Any request will be subject to recommendation from the Head of School or Deputy Head of School, and approval by the Director, Graduate Research.

(34) A candidate who withdraws from a course after the census date will incur an academic penalty unless this is waived by the Head of School or Deputy Head of School and endorsed by the Director, Graduate Research.

(35) The Director, Graduate Research is authorised to limit admissions and enrolment for HDR programs.

Section 7 - Candidature Progression

(36) While enrolled, candidates must act in accordance with:

a. the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature;
b. the terms and conditions of enrolment; and
c. all relevant University's policies and procedures.

(37) Candidates must pay any prescribed fees for the program and/or course(s) to the University or a partner organisation by the due date. Failure to pay any fees due by their due date may prevent candidates from enrolling or result in termination of candidature.

(38) Candidates may have conditions placed on their continued candidature in circumstances outlined in Clause 91.

Confirmation

(39) Candidates must progress from provisional candidature to confirmed status by satisfying the following confirmation requirements:

a. present a written document to the Confirmation Committee containing at least:
    i. a critical review of recent work in the field;
    ii. an updated research proposal;
    iii. an updated plan of research;
    iv. an updated timetable for completion of the thesis; and
    v. a comprehensive statement of the resources required to complete the project within the funded period; and
b. deliver an oral presentation and provide a verbal defence of the research proposal to the Confirmation Committee.

(40) Doctoral Degree (Research) and Masters Degree (Research) candidates must undertake confirmation within twelve months of commencement of candidature on a full-time basis (or part-time equivalent), noting that the first confirmation should be scheduled at nine months to allow for the opportunity of a second attempt (if required). It is

recommended that part time PhD candidates undertake confirmation within 18 calendar months. Candidates may apply to undertake confirmation earlier with the support of the supervisor and Head of School or Deputy Head of School and approval of the Director, Graduate Research.

(41) Candidates in the Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication Program are not required to complete confirmation.

(42) The Director, Graduate Research may approve written requests to extend a candidate's provisional period, subject to the recommendation of the supervisor and Head of School or Deputy Head of School.

(43) A candidate cannot submit a thesis for examination unless they are confirmed.

(44) A maximum of two attempts at confirmation is permitted. The Director, Graduate Research is authorised to approve a candidate to attempt confirmation a third time under exceptional circumstances.

(45) The confirmation process is outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure and Confirmation of Candidature Guidelines.

Progress Reports

(46) All candidates and supervisors are required to submit progress reports as outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure.

School Progress Support Plan

(47) Where there are concerns that a HDR candidate is at risk of not completing their program the candidate may be placed on a School Progress Support Plan, as outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure.

Section 8 - Candidature Changes

Internal Transfers

(48) Candidates are not permitted to transfer into or out of the Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication.

(49) A candidate's request to transfer from one Higher Degree by Research to another may be in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Procedure, subject to the candidate meeting the following:

a. payment of all relevant fees and charges prescribed by the University; and
b. the requirements described in either the Doctoral Degree (Research) Program and Awards Schedule or Masters Degree (Research) Program and Awards Schedule, depending on which program the candidate is seeking transfer into.

Transfer of candidature from another university

(50) An applicant who has completed a period of candidature at another university for a Masters Degree (Research) or Doctoral Degree (Research) may be permitted by the Director, Graduate Research, on the recommendation of the Head of School or Deputy Head of School, to count the whole or any part of the period of this enrolment as a period completed in a HDR program for the same degree at the University, subject to:

a. the period of advanced study and research being:
    i. carried out under supervision in accordance with applicable ethics requirements; and
    ii. directly related to the candidate's proposed program at the University;

b. the candidate formally withdrawing from their enrolment in the HDR program of the other university for which the previous tenure is applicable (except in the case of Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree (JADD) and Dual Award Doctoral Degree (DADD) approved candidates); and
c. the candidate meeting the minimum period of enrolment as prescribed in the relevant Awards and Programs Schedule (unless an exemption is granted by the Director, Graduate Research).

(51) International HDR candidates who are seeking to transfer to the University from another registered provider's program must have completed six months of their principal program, unless:

a. the releasing registered provider of the program in which the international HDR candidate is enrolled has ceased to be registered;
b. the releasing registered provider has had a sanction imposed on its registration by the ESOS agency that will prevent the international HDR candidate from continuing their program at that registered provider;
c. the releasing registered provider has agreed to the international HDR candidate's release and reported the date of effect and reason for release to the Australian Government; or
d. a government sponsor of the international HDR candidate considers the change to be in the candidate's best interests and has provided written support for the change.

Withdrawal from Program

(52) A candidate may withdraw from a HDR program up to the date that the thesis is submitted.

(53) If a candidate withdraws before the census date, their enrolment for that semester will be dropped and will not be included in the calculation of time spent enrolled.

(54) A candidate will remain liable for any fees and charges associated with their enrolment should they withdraw after the census date for the term.

Section 9 - Completion timeframes

(55) The required timeframes to complete a HDR program are outlined in the relevant Awards and Program Schedule.

(56) Exceptions to minimum and maximum times for completion of a program may be approved by the Director, Graduate Research.

(57) Candidature will be automatically extended if the candidate is within the program time requirements and:

a. has been granted a leave of absence;
b. is placed on a period of exclusion or academic suspension; or
c. is approved to change their study load from full time to part time.

(58) Under the ESOS Act, an international HDR candidate must complete a HDR program within the maximum duration specified, unless:

a. the University has approved an extension due to compassionate or compelling circumstances; or
b. the candidate is on an intervention strategy (School Progress Support Plan) in accordance with the relevant provisions of the ESOS Act.

(59) Requests to extend a candidature end date must be submitted at least four weeks before the thesis due date, as outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure.

Section 10 - Thesis Requirements

(60) A thesis will:

a. be written in English;
b. be accompanied by an abstract of approximately 300 words describing its content;
c. include a table of contents which provides a list of thesis chapters and major sections, with page numbers;
d. be compliant with copyright provisions and avoid copyright infringement (see Copyright Compliance Policy and the Copyright in your Digital Thesis information sheet);
e. include a statement of originality (see Thesis Required Statements Information);
f. where applicable, include a statement acknowledging support received from the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (see Thesis Required Statements Information); and
g. where applicable, include statements acknowledging collaboration and authorship (see Thesis Required Statements Information). Such statements must be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor.

(61) A thesis may:

a. include publications arising as a consequence of the research undertaken for the thesis;
b. include a written statement signed by the Principal Supervisor, attesting to the candidate's contribution to a joint publication when the candidate includes any of the following (note, a statement is not required when publications are included as an appendix to the thesis):
    i. co-authored published paper;
    ii. co-authored scholarly work;
    iii. substantive component of a co-authored published paper; or
    iv. co-authored scholarly work in the body of the thesis;
c. in the creative and performing arts, consist of two parts: the creative component and the exegesis. The Research Thesis with a Creative Component Procedure sets the requirements for the creative component, the exegesis, and the relationship between the two parts, and also set out the process for presentation and examination.

(62) A doctoral thesis submitted in the form of a typescript should not normally exceed 100,000 words, excluding appendices, tables, and illustrative matter.

(63) A master's thesis submitted in the form of a typescript should not normally exceed 80,000 words, excluding appendices, tables, and illustrative matter.

(64) An exegesis forming part of a thesis and accompanying a creative or literary work, or series of works, should not normally exceed 40,000 words excluding appendices, tables, and illustrative matter.

(65) A contextual statement (exegesis) component of a Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication thesis should not normally exceed 40,000 words, or be less than 10,000 words, excluding appendices, tables, and illustrative matter.

(66) Use of a professional editor is permitted in preparing the thesis for submission. Candidates are required to comply with the Guidelines for Editing Research Theses as provided by the Institute of Professional Editors and the Australian Council of Graduate Research Inc.

Thesis by Publication

(67) A thesis by publication will include:

a. a full explanatory overview that links the separate papers and places them in the context of an established body of knowledge;
b. a literature review; and
c. if detailed data and descriptions of methods are not otherwise given within the separate papers, they must be included in the body of the thesis or as appendices to the thesis.

(68) For a thesis by publication:

a. the separate papers provided under Clause 67 must be published in press or submitted to scholarly media only, (i.e. refereed publications classified by current national standards and refereed conference papers, however at least 50% of these papers must have been published). Papers published up to three years prior to enrolment may be included provided they were published in scholarly media and do not represent more than 50% of the total papers;
b. publications submitted by the candidate for another degree may only be referred to in the thesis literature review;
c. the number of papers submitted should demonstrate that the body of work meets the requirements of the degree as outlined in the relevant schedule;
d. the candidate must be the lead author in at least 50% of the papers written during the time of their HDR candidature. Any published paper of which the candidate is a joint author may only be included in the thesis provided the work of the candidate is clearly identified. A written statement from each co-author attesting to the candidate's contribution to a joint publication must be included as part of the thesis (see Research Authorship Procedure). These statements must be endorsed by the Head of School or Deputy Head of School; and
e. the Head of School or Deputy Head of School may seek the approval of the Director, Graduate Research to include a paper that is outside the requirements of this Policy.

(69) A thesis by publication is not an eligible thesis format for Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication candidates.

Thesis by Prior Publication

(70) A thesis by prior publication may only be submitted by Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication candidates.

(71) A thesis by prior publication will include:

a. A collection of original published works as the lead or sole author published prior to beginning the Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication. Any published paper of which the candidate is a joint author may only be included in the thesis provided the work of the candidate is clearly identified. A written statement from each co-author attesting to the candidate's contribution to a joint publication must be included as part of the thesis (see Research Authorship Procedure). These statements must be endorsed by the Head of School or Deputy Head of School. The definition of a lead author is to be determined by the School, consistent with any applicable disciplinary norms;
b. A contextual statement, which is a substantive integrating written component linking the publications together into a coherent theme, and make clear how the publications meet the requirements and standards of a Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication as described in the Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication – Awards and Programs Schedule; and
c. If detailed data and descriptions of methods are not otherwise given within the separate publications, they must be included in the body of the thesis or appendices to the thesis.

(72) Publications submitted by the candidate for another degree may only be referred to in appendices.

(73) A thesis by prior publication may include publications that are not part of the original thesis plan, but are accepted during candidature, if agreed upon by the Principal Supervisor.

Section 11 - Thesis Examination

(74) The following principles apply to the examination of a candidate's thesis:

a. candidates must be enrolled in a HDR program at the University at the time of submission of their thesis;
b. the greater part of the research must be completed at the University, unless the candidate is enrolled in a Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication or approval is granted by the Director, Graduate Research for research to be undertaken at another institution where no other award has been conferred;
c. the candidate must have completed any courses or practicum/clinical experience/placements required for the degree before the thesis is submitted;
d. a thesis submitted for a HDR must meet the requirements of the degree as prescribed in the relevant Awards and Program Schedule;
e. a thesis will not be accepted for examination if a candidate has not been confirmed in their program;
f. where a candidate receives a thesis examination outcome of revise and resubmit, any revised thesis must be submitted for examination for the same award as previously examined;
g. Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication candidates are not eligible to receive an outcome of revise and resubmit;
h. where a thesis has been examined, and the candidate has been permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis, work published since the original examination may be included as an appendix to the resubmitted thesis; and
i. a candidate will be permitted to amend or revise and resubmit a thesis for examination once only.

(75) Candidates enrolled in a Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree (JADD) or Dual Award Doctoral Degree (DADD) program may be subject to additional or varied conditions regarding the thesis and thesis examination. Additional conditions will be described in the relevant JADD or DADD Agreement under which the candidate has been enrolled.

(76) The thesis procedural requirements, including submission of thesis, appointment of examiners and outcomes are detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure.

Examiner Requirements

(77) The Director, Graduate Research is authorised to appoint external examiners on the recommendation of the principal supervisor and Head of School or Deputy Head of School.

(78) Examiners must have:

a. a qualification of at least the same level as that for which the candidate is being examined;
b. HDR supervisory and/or examination experience;
c. some familiarity with the Australian HDR system, including the examination system, and;
d. expertise in the topic and/or methodology of the thesis and be able to evaluate whether or not the thesis meets the criteria for the award of the degree.

(79) Examiners should not:

a. be employed by the University of Newcastle in any capacity, or have been employed at the University within five years preceding the date of thesis submission;

b. be engaged in any ongoing collaborations with members of the candidate's supervisory team;
c. have collaborated or published research with either the candidate or members of the supervisory team in the 5 years prior to the date of thesis submission;
d. have worked with the candidate or supervisors on matters relating to the thesis research;
e. be currently engaged in the joint supervision of candidates with members of the candidate's supervisory team or have been engaged in co-supervision within the 5 years prior to the date of thesis submission;
f. have been a colleague of the candidate during the candidate's period of enrolment for their HDR program;
g. have worked with the candidate during any period of visitation to the University, or provided the candidate with any feedback regarding their thesis research during any period of visitation;
h. have been a candidate of the supervisor(s) during the candidate's period of enrolment for their HDR program; or
i. have any commercial interest in the outcomes of the research reported in the thesis to be examined.

(80) At least one of the examiners should be based outside of Australia and the two examiners must be based at two different institutions.

(81) Candidates with the same supervisor must not have the same pair of examiners.

(82) Where the candidate identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or the thesis is on an Indigenous research topic, at least one of the proposed examiners should be Indigenous or have expertise in Indigenous research.

Section 12 - Completion of Program

(83) To be conferred a degree a HDR candidate must have been enrolled and satisfied the relevant requirements prescribed in this Policy, the Higher Degree by Research Procedure, and the relevant degree Award and Programs Schedule.

(84) Candidates enrolled in a JADD or DADD program may be required to meet additional requirements that will be specified in the JADD or DADD Agreement (see also Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degrees and Dual Award Doctoral Degrees Policy).

(85) A final electronic copy of the thesis must be received before the award can be approved and the degree conferred by the University.

Section 13 - Posthumous Awards

(86) A HDR award may be granted posthumously to a deceased candidate subject to the following requirements:

a. the candidate was active (currently enrolled or on approved leave of absence) in the program at the time of their death;
b. there is a reasonable expectation that the candidate would have satisfactorily completed the requirements for the award had they not passed away;
c. consideration for a posthumous award is proposed and supported by the relevant Head of School or Deputy Head of School; and
d. the appointed examiners determine that work of the candidate meets the required criteria.

(87) Intellectual property rights, where these apply, will be resolved in accordance with the University's Intellectual Property Policy and its associated documents.

(88) The Higher Degree by Research Procedure outlines the procedures for granting of a posthumous award in the event of the death of an enrolled HDR candidate of the University.

(89) Please also refer to the Deceased Student Reporting Procedure and Awards and Graduation Policy.

Section 14 - Termination of candidature

(90) The Director, Graduate Research is authorised to terminate candidature where the candidate:

a. has failed to pay fees and charges payable to the University or a partner institution;
b. has failed to enrol or re-enrol by the date specified; or
c. is absent without approved leave for a period exceeding six months.

(91) The Director, Graduate Research may terminate or place conditions on HDR candidature, subject to recommendation by the Research Training Sub-Committee, where the candidate:

a. has not met one or more of the conditions stated in the offer of admission;
b. has not complied with the rules or policies of the University;
c. has failed to complete the University's HDR induction session or any other mandatory training requirements in the timeframes prescribed by the Director, Graduate Research and outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure;
d. has failed to satisfy the confirmation requirements in the timeframe prescribed;
e. has been deemed to have unsatisfactory progress of candidature by the Research Training Sub-Committee;
f. has failed to submit a progress report;
g. has failed to submit a thesis within time limits prescribed by the relevant Awards and Program Schedule, including extensions of time;
h. has failed to submit the final electronic copy of their thesis within prescribed timeframe as outlined in the Offer of Admission;
i. has failed to comply with a reasonable direction of the supervisors, Head of School or Deputy Head of School, Director, Graduate Research or the Research Training Sub-Committee (for example, failure to satisfactorily participate in a School Progress Support Plan);
j. is no longer able to undertake the agreed research project for reasons such as, but not limited to:
    i. the candidate is unable to be supervised by appropriate supervisors and alternatives cannot be found after reasonable efforts by the University; or
    ii. the project is no longer viable and an appropriate alternative cannot be found; or
k. specifically for international HDR candidates studying in Australia;
    i. has not completed their program in the maximum time as stated in their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) and does not have an approved extension for compassionate or compelling circumstances; or
    ii. has not participated in a documented School Progress Support Plan.

(92) If the Director, Graduate Research considers there is a reason to seek recommendation from the Research Training Sub-Committee to terminate candidature, the candidate will be given an opportunity to show cause as outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure.

(93) The Student Conduct Rule applies when allegations of research misconduct or non-academic misconduct are made.

Section 15 - Appeals

(94) The Higher Degree by Research Procedure outlines the appeals procedures for HDR candidates.

Appeals against classification of thesis

(95) A candidate may lodge an appeal against a Fail classification of their thesis in writing within 20 working days of the date of the letter of notification of classification.

(96) Appeals against a Fail classification of a thesis are considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

(97) Appeals against a Fail classification of a thesis will only be permitted on the following grounds:

a. procedural irregularities in the examination of the thesis or in the conduct of any examination that forms part of the determination of the result. Appellants are expected to demonstrate that an aspect(s) of the examination process, as determined detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure or its associated documents, was not appropriately followed and that this caused, or was likely to have substantially contributed to, the classification of the thesis; or
b. documented evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the examiners.

Appeals against termination of candidature

(98) A candidate whose candidature has been terminated under the provisions of this Policy may appeal the decision in writing within 20 working days of the date of the notification of termination of candidature.

(99) Appeals to termination of candidature are considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

(100) Appeals against termination of candidature will only be considered on procedural grounds, such as a breach of this Policy or the Higher Degree by Research Procedure.

(101) The following are not matters that form the basis of an appeal:

a. rejecting an assessment of the merit of the candidate's work;
b. inadequacy of supervision; or
c. other arrangements during the period of study.

(102) Matters listed in Clause 101 may be considered under the University's Complaint Management Policy.

(103) The University will report a breach of an international HDR candidate's progress or attendance to the Department of Home Affairs if:

a. internal and external complaints processes (for instance the NSW Ombudsman) have been completed and the breach has been upheld;
b. the international HDR candidate has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals process within the 20 working day period;
c. the international HDR candidate has chosen not to access the external complaints and appeals process; or
d. the international HDR candidate withdraws from the internal or external appeals process by notifying the registered provider in writing.

Consideration of Appeals

(104) Appeals made by HDR candidates in accordance with this Policy and its associated Procedure will be considered in a transparent and timely manner with the aim of determining an outcome as soon as reasonably and practicably possible. The assessment of the appeal will be undertaken in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.

(105) Where a HDR candidate is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, an external appeal may be lodged with the NSW Ombudsman. In most cases, the purpose of the external appeals process is to consider whether the University has complied with this Policy and its associated procedures. That is, a decision in place of the University's decision may not be forthcoming.

(106) In all cases, HDR candidates will be provided with a written advice outlining the outcome of the appeal, including:

a. the reasons for the outcome;
b. avenues of further appeal; and
c. support services available to the candidate.

(107) Records relating to HDR appeals must be maintained in accordance with the Records Governance Policy.

Section 16 - Program Management

Quality Assurance

(108) As a self-accrediting organisation, the University must comply with all elements of the Higher Education Threshold Standards Framework (HESF) and the qualifications offered must align with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

(109) Quality assurance processes will be evidence-based and externally referenced. Judgements about performance and decisions about improvements will be informed by data and formal feedback collected from a range of internal and external sources.

(110) Findings from quality assurance processes will be used to identify changes that need to be made to improve education quality. Once implemented, these changes will be assessed to ensure they deliver the desired outcomes.

(111) The outcomes of education quality assurance processes will be communicated to candidates, staff and other stakeholders.

(112) Academic Senate is responsible for ensuring that programs offered by the University comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework (where appropriate) including the:

a. learning outcomes, graduate attributes and generic skills;
b. quality assurance arrangements for each program, including a system of review and audit; and
c. development of policies and procedures relating to quality program management.

(113) The University's Education Quality Assurance Policy outlines the whole-of-institution approach to the quality assurance of programs and courses.

Development of HDR Programs

(114) The Program and Course Approval Committee, a committee of Academic Senate, is authorised to approve the creation of new programs and revisions to existing programs, subject to the prior endorsement of the relevant College,

the Research Training Sub-Committee and the Research Committee.

(115) New programs may be developed in response to the strategic directions of the University, College, or Division, or to meet external accreditation requirements.

(116) Masters Degree (Research) and Doctoral Degree (Research) programs must be developed according to the relevant Awards and Programs Schedule, ensuring that:

a. any proposed new program complies with:
    i. the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (Second Edition);
    ii. the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021; and
    iii. relevant University policies.
b. admission into a program of advanced study and research is approved by the Head of School, Deputy Head of School or Director, Graduate Research;
c. upon admission candidates will have provisional candidature until they satisfy the University's confirmation requirements, which must be completed within 12 months of commencement of provisional candidature on a full-time or part-time equivalent basis, as detailed in the Higher Degree by Research Procedure;
d. candidates have their enrolment status updated to “confirmed” after satisfying the requirements of confirmation;
e. the research is primarily embodied in a thesis. Other work may be submitted and considered in conjunction with the thesis, in accordance with the Research Thesis with a Creative Component Procedure;
f. the thesis topic is approved at the time of admission and any subsequent changes are approved by the Head of School or Deputy Head of School and endorsed by the Director, Graduate Research; and
g. the program must be carried out under the direction of supervisors appointed by the Director, Graduate Research on the recommendation of the Head of School or Deputy Head of School, noting that supervision arrangements must be consistent with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature.

HDR Program Revisions

(117) The Program and Course Approval Committee will ensure that revisions to HDR programs:

a. do not disadvantage continuing candidates; and
b. comply with the Academic Senate approved cycle of program reviews.

(118) The Head of School or Deputy Head of School is required to consult with stakeholders on any proposed revisions or variations to a HDR program, including candidates, supervisors and the Director, Graduate Research.

Discontinuation

(119) Prior to discontinuing a HDR program, the Program and Course Approval Committee must ensure that:

a. candidates enrolled in the program are not disadvantaged;
b. appropriate teach-out or alternative arrangements have been made for current candidates; and
c. consideration is given to international HDR applicants in accordance with the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (CTH) (ESOS Act).

Section 17 - Relaxing Provision

(120) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any case, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) may relax any provision of this Policy, provided that the relaxation:

a. does not compromise compliance with external obligations (including but not limited to contractual, legislative or accreditation requirements);
b. does not override a decision made under a formal delegation of authority;
c. does not replace a decision that is subject to a formal delegation of authority; and
d. gives due consideration to the principles of procedural fairness.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	12th November 2025
Review Date	9th October 2028
Approval Authority	President Academic Senate
Approval Date	11th November 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Craig Simmons Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Enquiries Contact	Rohan Walker Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) Graduate Research

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Working day" - Any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday in Newcastle, on which business may be conducted.

"Applicant" - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Award" - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Campus" - means any place or premises owned or controlled by the University, but may also specifically refer to a designated operating location such as the Callaghan Campus.

"Candidature" - The period of time between acceptance of offer and termination, withdrawal from, or completion of a higher degree by research program, including periods when a candidate is not enrolled.

"Census date" - The date in each term on which a student / candidate enrolled in a course is deemed to be financially liable for the course.

"Confirmation Committee" - A panel convened by the School of the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) program in which the candidate is enrolled, for the purpose of confirmation of candidature.

"Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE)" - Means the document issued through the Australian Government's relevant department and associated systems, by authorised officers of the University that confirms that an international student is eligible to enrol in a course. The CoE is required under Commonwealth Legislation for the student visa.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric

course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Non-academic misconduct" - Means conduct by a student that is defined as non-academic misconduct in the Student Conduct Rule.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" - Means an assessment of an individual's prior learning to determine where credit will be granted. RPL includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning.

"Dual Award Doctoral Degree (DADD)" - Is an arrangement whereby a doctoral degree candidate is jointly supervised by the University and another institution, is enrolled at both institutions, and receives two testamurs, each acknowledging the dual award. Each DADD candidature is governed by an individual Candidate Agreement.

"Jointly Awarded Doctoral Degree (JADD)" - Is an arrangement whereby a doctoral degree candidate is jointly supervised by the University and another institution, is enrolled at both institutions and receives one award bearing the seals of both institutions. Each JADD candidature is governed by an individual Candidate Agreement and a JADD Agreement between the collaborating institutions.

"Learning outcome" - In accordance with the AQF definitions, the expression of a set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Research misconduct" - A serious breach of the Australian Coe for the Responsible Conduct of Research that is intentional, reckless or negligent.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Term" - When referring to an academic period, term means a period of time aligned to an academic year for the delivery of a course in which students enrol and for which they are usually charged fees for example semesters, trimesters, summer, winter or full-year term. The academic year for a term is determined by the academic year in which the course commences, not concludes. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Thesis" - A dissertation involving research by a candidate for the award of a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) qualification.

"Intellectual property rights" - All present and future rights to intellectual property including any inventions and improvements, trademarks (whether registered or common law trade marks), designs, copyright, any corresponding property rights under the Laws of any jurisdiction and any rights in respect of an invention, discovery, trade secret, secret process, know-how, concept, idea, information, process, data, or formula.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Delegated authority" - refers to the specific description of the authority that is delegated or sub-delegated to a holder.