Purpose

The Research Training Program (RTP) is a Commonwealth Government scheme established to support domestic and international candidates enrolled in Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs.

The (RTP) provides three levels of funding support for candidates. Candidates may receive one or more of the following benefits:

- Fee offset;
- Stipend for general living costs; and
- Allowances related to the ancillary cost of research degrees.

This Policy describes the types of funding support available to candidates in a HDR program at Federation University Australia (FedUni).
Scope

This Policy applies to all Higher Degree by Research candidature applicants, candidates, and persons with supervisory or administrative responsibilities for HDR candidates and candidature applications.

Legislative Context

Regulation 5.1 - Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Masters Degree by Research and Professional Doctorates

Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RTP</td>
<td>Research Training Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Supervisor</td>
<td>A person who provides support to the student and to the Principal Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate</td>
<td>A student enrolled in a HDR program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidature Applicant</td>
<td>A prospective student applying for a HDR program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>A change in candidature from a Masters Degree (Research) to a Doctoral Degree, or vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFTSL</td>
<td>Estimated Full Time Study Load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>One of the following academic units of FedUni: School of Education and Arts, School of Health, School of Science and technology, The Business School</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDR</td>
<td>Higher Degree by Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Degree by Research Coordinator (HDRC)</td>
<td>Academic School staff member assigned administrative responsibilities to oversee candidature matters as designated by the School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Degree by Research Program</td>
<td>One of the following courses of study: Masters Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Research), or Doctoral degree (Professional).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Degree by Research candidate</td>
<td>A Federation University Australia student enrolled in a Masters Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Research), or Doctoral degree (Professional).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave from studies</td>
<td>Periods of either six or 12 months, covering the normal teaching period(s), when an enrolled student is excused from formal study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestones</td>
<td>Specific requirements of candidature that must be met for a candidate to progress, such as Confirmation of Candidature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>Offer of Admission to Candidature – The written offer provided to an applicant for admission to a HDR program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Supervisor</td>
<td>A staff member of FedUni who meets the requirements of and has been approved for inclusion to the Register of Supervisors as a principal supervisor and has primary oversight for a HDR candidate’s research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probationary Candidate</td>
<td>A FedUni student enrolled in a Masters Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Research), or Doctoral degree (Professional) who has not yet completed the confirmation of candidature process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>A sequence of study/research leading to the granting of an official award or qualification of FedUni contained in University Schedule 5.1 or in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy Statement

1. Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship Eligibility

1.1 Eligibility for an RTP Scholarship

(1) To be eligible for an RTP Stipend, RTP Fees Offset or RTP Allowance a student must be a domestic student or an overseas student enrolled in an accredited HDR course of study at an Australian HEP.

(2) To be eligible for an RTP Stipend a student must not be receiving income from another source to support that student’s general living costs while undertaking their course of study if that income is greater than 75 per cent of that student’s RTP Stipend rate. Income unrelated to the student’s course of study or income received for the student’s course of study but not for the purposes of supporting general living costs is not to be taken into account.

(3) To be eligible for an RTP Fees Offset a student must not be receiving an equivalent award or scholarship from the Commonwealth designed to offset HDR fees.

2. Research Training Program (RTP) Fee Offset

2.1 Fee Offset Summary

The RTP Fee Offset contributes to the cost of providing research training to HDR candidates at FedUni, and includes, where applicable, costs such as:

- information technology provision and support,
- library and other research support services,
- HDR supervisor salary and related on-costs,
- FedUni infrastructure used to support HDR research topic with laboratory equipment, field trips, access to external equipment and facilities,
- HDR industry placements and commercialisation skills training costs,
- Support for travel, accommodation and conference costs related to an HDR candidate’s program of work,
- HDR development training.

Candidates will be advised of the value of a RTP Fee Offset Scholarship in their Letter of Offer of Admission to Candidature or Conditions of Candidature statement.

2.2 Periods of support
An RTP Fee Offset Scholarship is available for:

- Three years full time or six years part-time for doctoral candidates,
- 18 months full time or 36 months part-time for masters candidates,
- Under exceptional circumstances, a further extension of up to six months may be available subject to the approval of the Dean, Graduate Studies.

Candidates may request an extension of the RTP Fee Offset (up to six months for both doctoral candidates and masters candidates) beyond the above periods of support where their HDR studies have been severely impacted by circumstances beyond their control. Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- Documented medical issues with substantial periods of leave,
- Unforeseen circumstances which impact the progress of a candidate’s research topic, e.g. natural disaster in a data collection area.

A candidate who remains enrolled beyond their stated period of supported RTP Fee Offset Scholarship will be liable for paying the fees for their remaining candidature.

RTP Fee Offset scholarships may be terminated in accordance with Section 12.1 of this policy.

2.3 Periods of RTP Fee Offset Scholarship will be impacted if candidates:

- Take a period of intermission / leave from studies,
- Do not maintain their enrolment,
- Have submitted their thesis,
- Do not maintain satisfactory progress,
- Were previously awarded a RTP Fee Offset Scholarship at another Higher Education Provider (HEP) and did not complete the program,
- Were previously awarded a RTP Fee Offset Scholarship for a Higher Degree by Research program at FedUni and did not complete the program,
- Transfer between HDR programs or HEPs, as per section 10 - Variations to Candidature.

2.4 Awarding of RTP Fee Offset Scholarships

FedUni will award RTP Fee Offset Scholarships to HDR candidates as follows:

- All candidates who are recipients of a Research Training Program Stipend (RTP Stipend) and who are enrolled in an approved HDR program will automatically qualify for an RTP Fee Offset place,
- Candidates who are not RTP Stipend holders but who are enrolled in HDR programs as specified in Schedule 5.1 may also be eligible for an RTP Fee Offset, depending on availability.

Candidates who are already receiving an equivalent fee scholarship or award for the same purpose from another source will not be eligible for an RTP Fee Offset scholarship.

RTP Fee Offset scholarships will be awarded by the Dean Graduate Studies taking into account factors such as:

- The number of RTP Fee Offset scholarships available,
- Academic merit,
- Alignment with the University of School Strategic Research Plans.

Preference will be given to candidates whose research topic is strongly aligned with FedUni’s Research Priority Areas.

2.5 Continuity of Study after RTP Fee Offset period of support
HDR candidates who have exceeded their RTP Fee Offset scholarship entitlement will be charged the fee offset amount for the remaining period of their program. Fees will be charged on a pro-rata basis determined by the period of enrolment.

3. Research Training Program (RTP) Stipend

3.1 RTP Stipend Summary

RTP stipends are provided to support the general living costs of HDR candidates through an annual stipend. Stipends are normally awarded to candidates enrolled in a doctoral degree. In some circumstances, prospective candidates seeking entry to a masters degree may be awarded an RTP Stipend.

3.2 Periods of support

An RTP Stipend is available for:

- Three years full time for doctoral candidates,
- 18 months full time for masters candidates,
- Under exceptional circumstances, a further extension of up to six months may be available subject to the approval of the Dean Graduate Studies.

No further extensions will be granted for RTS Stipend Scholarships.

Stipends are normally awarded to full time candidates. Under exceptional circumstances stipends may be awarded to candidates seeking part-time enrolment.

3.3 Awarding of RTP Stipend

To be considered for the awarding of an RTP Stipend, applicants must:

- Meet the FedUni’s HDR program entry requirements,
- Have applied for candidature in, or be currently enrolled in, an HDR program at FedUni Australia,
- Have not completed more than two years EFTSL or part-time equivalent for a doctoral degree or six months EFTSL or part-time equivalent for a masters degree, if a current FedUni HDR candidate,
- Take up the stipend on a full-time basis, unless exceptional circumstances apply,
- Maintain satisfactory progress in their HDR program.

Specific criteria for eligibility for stipend scholarships offered by FedUni are presented in the Selection and Awarding of HDR Scholarships Procedure.

3.4 RTP Stipend rate

The RTP Stipend indexed rate is $26,682 pa (2017 rate) for full-time study. In the instance that a part-time candidate is awarded a RTP Stipend, the rate will be 50% of the full-time stipend rate. A RTP Fee Offset, allowances (see Section 4) and leave provisions (see Section 9) will also be provided to recipients of RTP Stipends.

4. Research Training Program Allowances

The RTP Allowances cover some costs related to the ancillary expenses associated with HDR degrees. These allowances include:

- Relocation Allowance for Australian Government RTP Stipend holders only (maximum of $2000),
• Overseas Health Cover will be provided to international candidates awarded a RTP Stipend,
• HDR thesis printing (maximum of $500).

4.2 Awarding of RTP Allowances

4.2.1 Relocation Allowance for RTP Stipend holders only

Value: Up to $2000

Candidates who plan to study full time on a FedUni campus, have been awarded an RTP Stipend and do not live in Victoria, Australia at the time of candidature offer, can apply for a once-off RTP Relocation Allowance valued at up to $2000.

RTP Relocation Allowance permits reimbursement for:
• Cost of economy airfares for the candidate to Melbourne, Australia,
• Cost of public transport from Melbourne to the new location in proximity to their campus of study,
• Cost of moving household items from the home location to the new location in proximity to their campus of study (Australian residents only).

Should the cost of relocating exceed the maximum value of the allowance, only the maximum value of the allowance ($2000) will apply. Candidates will need to supply original receipts to secure their reimbursement.

Relocation costs will not be reimbursed for the securing of a new residence (e.g. bond, rent in advance, etc.) or other household costs (e.g. connection of essential services such as electricity).

4.2.2 Overseas Health Cover costs (OSHC)

FedUni will pay for the costs of OSHC provided by the FedUni-preferred supplier to international candidates who have been awarded an RTP Stipend. Periods of OSHC will be stipulated on the Letter of Offer of Admission to Candidature and will reflect the period of RTP Stipend allocation.

4.2.3 Thesis allowance

Value: Up to $500

FedUni will reimburse the costs related to the production of the final corrected (accepted by the School Examination Committee) and bound version of the thesis.

5. Application, selection and offers for RTP Scholarships

The FedUni application, selection and offer procedures for all FedUni HDR scholarships, including the RTP Stipends, are specified in:
• HDR Candidate Selection Policy,
• Selection and Awarding of HDR Scholarships Procedure,
• Selection and Awarding of a HDR Place Procedure.

5.1 RTP Stipend Application

Applications for RTP Stipends will open in September of each year and close on 31st October each year. Applications will only be accepted via the method outlined on the FedUni HDR Scholarships website.

Applicants for stipend scholarships are also required to simultaneously submit an Application for Candidature. It is the applicant’s responsibility to provide all documentation required for consideration for both candidature and RTP Stipends. An incomplete or a late stipend or candidature application will not be considered for an RTP Stipend.
5.2 RTP Stipend selection and offers
In the selection of applicants for allocation of stipends, FedUni aims to achieve inclusive and equitable outcomes taking into account strategic considerations and the availability of suitable resources and project supervision and the academic merit of applicants. In doing so, FedUni will ensure that it operates in accord with the University’s Fair and Transparent Decision Making Guidelines.

6. RTP Fee Offset selection and offer
Processes for offering, awarding and selection of RTP Fee Offset Scholarships are stipulated in:
- HDR Candidate Selection Policy
- Selection and Awarding of a HDR Place Procedure

7. Supervision and research infrastructure support provisions

7.1 Supervision
All HDR candidates are allocated a supervisory panel consisting of a Principal Supervisor from their School of enrolment and at least one Associate Supervisor, who is a FedUni staff member. Supervisory panels will be proposed by the School of enrolment stated on the HDR Application form and then approved by the Research Higher Degree Committee (RHDC). Supervisory panels may also include one or more external Co-Supervisors. All Supervisors must be approved and be on the FedUni Register of Supervisors. The School is responsible for ensuring adequate HDR supervision throughout the period of HDR candidature.

Responsibilities of HDR supervisors and the requirements for registration on the Register of Supervisors are stipulated in:
- HDR Supervision Policy,
- Responsibilities for Supervision of HDR Candidates Procedure,
- Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Candidates Procedure.

7.2 Research Infrastructure
It is the responsibility of the School of enrolment to ensure that there are adequate facilities and related research infrastructure to directly support the research for all admitted HDR candidates. Facilities and infrastructure must be approved by the Dean of the School. Minimum resources for candidates are:
- Adequate physical facilities / resources (which comply with the FedUni’s Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) policies),
- Financial support as advised by the School Associate Dean Research on an annual basis through the School of enrolment,
- Research environment & culture, opportunities to link with staff/students, participate in research seminars/workshops, research discussions, journal clubs, etc. as organised at the Discipline-level,
- Local and Occupational Health and Safety inductions.

8. Leave from Studies
A candidate may apply for leave from studies extending for at least one teaching period (6 months) and up to one year.

Applications for leave from studies by candidates who have not yet undertaken Confirmation of Candidature or whose progress is unsatisfactory will only be considered after a candidature management plan has been
developed by the candidate and Principal Supervisor, and endorsed by the School Associate Dean Research and approved by the Dean, Graduate Studies.

Conditions, processes and requirements for taking Leave from Studies are specified in:
- Candidature Management Policy,
- Candidature Management Procedure.

9. Absentee Leave for RTP Stipend holders

RTP Stipend holders have access to the following leave entitlements:

- Recreation Leave: 20 working days of paid recreation leave per year. This may be accrued and carried forward, but entitlements are forfeited on the cessation of the stipend. Taking recreation leave does not extend the period of candidature or RTP entitlements.
- Sick Leave: up to 20 working days of paid sick leave per year. This may be accrued and carried forward but entitlements are forfeited on the cessation of the stipend.
- Additional unpaid sick leave of up to 12 weeks during the term of the RTP Stipend for illness where insufficient leave is available. A record of medical certification for all sick leave is required. Sick leave may be used for candidates with family caring responsibilities. Taking sick leave does not extend the period of candidature or RTP Stipend entitlements.
- Parental Leave: Maximum of 12 weeks paid parental leave after completing 12 months of candidature for the primary-care parent of a newborn infant.
- Foster Care Leave: 15 working days, leave may be approved for foster parent leave if the candidate is the primary care giver after completing 12 months of candidature.
- Partner Leave: A candidate who is the partner of a woman giving birth may be entitled to 10 working days paid parenting leave if they are not the primary care giver. If they are the primary care-giver they may be entitled to an additional 50 weeks of unpaid carer’s leave.

With the exception of extended Sick Leave (more than 12 continuous weeks) and Parental Leave, absentee leave will not extend the duration of candidature. Conditions, requirements and entitlements for Leave for RTP Stipend holders are outlined in the Specific Terms and Conditions for Scholarships detailed in the Selection and Awarding of Scholarships Procedure.

10. Employment

In order to complete a HDR program within the RTP period of support (refer Section 2.2) it is reasonable to expect full-time HDR candidates to treat their studies as full-time work. Anything less than a commitment of 30 hours per week on a regular basis over the life of the degree will affect a timely completion. The expectation for part-time study is at least 50% of the full-time load. Candidates awarded an RTP Stipend may undertake paid employment during the period of their candidature providing they do not contravene Section 1(2).

Paid employment commitments during the period of candidature will not be accepted as grounds for an extension of either candidature or RTP entitlements.

10.1 RTP Stipend holders

A candidate in receipt of an RTP Stipend may undertake work subject to endorsement by both the Principal Supervisor and School Associate Dean Research, and approval by the Dean, Graduate Studies. Approval is based on satisfying the criteria that the work will not interfere with the satisfactory progress of the candidate’s study. This arrangement will be assessed by the School on an annual basis as part of the Annual Progress Review of candidature process.
10.2 RTP Fee Offset holders

Paid employment can be undertaken around HDR program commitments at any time of the year.

11. Variations to Candidature

11.1 Changes in a candidate’s research topic

A proposed change in research topic must show that suitable supervision for the new research topic is available, and the proposal must be endorsed by the Dean of the School of enrolment and approved by the Research by Higher Degree Committee. There will be no extension to the total duration of the RTP Scholarship (either stipend or fee offset) arising from change in either research topic or a change in supervisory team, or both.

Significant changes to a candidate’s research topic may require the candidate to undertake the Confirmation of Candidature process again should this be so decided by the RHDC.

11.2 Institutional transfer

HDR candidates from other institutions may apply to transfer their candidature to FedUni. FedUni requires that evidence from the previous institute be provided relating to enrolment periods and prior completion of milestones and/or Confirmation of Candidature, to determine the new conditions of candidature at the time of application to FedUni. The period of enrolment at the previous institution will be deducted from the usual period of candidature at FedUni. Applicants to FedUni transferring from another institute should follow the standard application procedure outlined on the FedUni website.

Transfer to FedUni will not normally be allowed for candidates who have completed more than two years EFTSL of a doctoral program or six months EFTSL of a master’s program.

11.3 Full-time / Part-time Candidature

Candidates requesting to change to full-time / part-time candidature may apply to FedUni stating the reasons for the requested change. Applications for change to conditions of candidature must obtain the endorsement of the Principal Supervisor and the School’s Dean and the approval of RHDC. Candidates requesting a change from full-time to part-time candidature, who hold an RTP Stipend, will be required to relinquish the stipend.

11.4 Conversion from Masters by Research program to doctoral candidature

Masters by Research candidates may apply to transfer to a doctoral program after having their master’s program confirmed. Masters by Research candidates will be required to undertake the Confirmation of Candidature steps as outlined in the Candidature Management Procedure for doctoral probationary candidates.

If a candidate transfers from a master's degree to a doctoral degree, the total duration of the RTP Stipend will be up to three years from the date that the candidate commenced the master's degree, with a possible extension of six months. They may apply for one further six-month extension to RTP Fee Offset only.

Applications for transfer between programs must be endorsed by the School of enrolment Dean and approved by RHDC.

11.5 Conversion from doctoral candidature to a Masters by Research program

Transfers from a doctoral program to a masters program will only be considered where an extension for candidature has not already been approved. Where a candidate has already exceeded the maximum allowable time for a Masters by Research candidate, their thesis must be submitted within six months of their transfer request, or part-time equivalent and any stipends will be terminated on approval of the conversion request.
Applications for transfer between programs must be endorsed by the School of enrolment Dean and approved by RHDC.

12. Termination of RTP Scholarship

12.1 RTP Scholarships will be terminated if one or more of the following criteria apply:
- The candidate ceases to meet the eligibility criteria,
- The maximum duration of the scholarship has been reached,
- The candidate fails to return from an approved period of Leave from Study,
- Their thesis is submitted for examination
- The candidate has committed serious misconduct, including the provision of false or misleading information,
- Candidature has been terminated due to unsatisfactory progress,
- The candidate fails to re-enrol, with no response to attempts at communication by FedUni,
- The candidate takes unapproved leave, with no response to attempts at communication by FedUni,
- The candidate fails to participate in a formal progress review and does not respond to reasonable requests to do so.

12.2 The RTP Stipend will be terminated if one or more of the following criteria apply:
- If the candidate ceases to be a full-time candidate,
- Where the School deems that the course of study is not being carried out with competence and diligence,
- Where the School deems that the candidate has failed to maintain satisfactory progress,
- Where a doctoral candidate fails to confirm within their first twelve months of full-time candidature.

If FedUni has reason to believe that a candidate in receipt of an RTP Stipend has provided false or misleading information in relation to the stipend it will re-assess the candidate’s entitlement. The candidate may be required to repay any stipend benefits to which they are not entitled.

12.3 Relinquishment of Scholarship

A candidate may relinquish their RTP Scholarship (stipend or fee offset) at any time by notifying the Dean, Graduate Studies in writing that they no longer require the support.

13. Grievance and review procedures

HDR Candidates should refer to the FedUni Student Grievance Policy and Student Grievance Procedure regarding processes and principles for submitting a grievance.

Processes and requirements for candidature review, including Annual and Interim Progress reporting are outlined in:
- HDR Candidature Management Policy,
- HDR Candidature Management Procedure.

14. Optional industry placements, research internships, professional practice activities

HDR candidates may undertake professional practice, internships or industry placements within fields related to their research topic with the written permission of their Principal Supervisor, Dean of School of enrolment and Dean of Graduate Studies. Approval for these activities will not be supported where a candidate:
• Does not have a letter of support from the industry partner,
• Has not yet confirmed candidature, or
• Has reached the maximum duration of their program.

Where an RTP Fee-offset holder is awarded a placement, internship or professional practice opportunity related to their study, their period of support will not be extended by the period of internship or placement.

Where an RTP Stipend holder is awarded a placement, internship or professional practice opportunity related to their study, FedUni will continue to pay the candidate scholarship payments for up to 12 weeks over the life of their scholarship except where Section 1(2) may apply. The period of stipend support will be extended by the period of placement or internship for up to 12 weeks.

All HDR candidates should consult with their Supervisory team and their School HDRC with respect to optional industry placements, research internships, and professional practice activities. Also, refer to Statute 8.2 Intellectual Property and Regulation 8.2 Intellectual Property.

15. Acknowledgement of RTP Scholarship funding

Candidates must ensure that the Commonwealth’s contribution to their research training via a RTP Scholarship is acknowledged in all publications arising from their research project

This acknowledgment must occur at any time during or after the completion of the HDR degree when the recipient of a RTP scholarship, their supervisor or any other party publishes or produces material such as books, articles, newsletters or other literary or artistic works which relate to the research project carried out by the candidate in receipt of an RTP scholarship.

Acknowledgement wording:

For HDR candidates in receipt of both an RTP Stipend and RTP Fee-Offset
<Student name> was/is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Stipend and RTP Fee-Offset Scholarship through Federation University Australia.

For HDR candidates in receipt of an RTP Fee-Offset Scholarship only
<Student name> was/is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Fee-Offset Scholarship through Federation University Australia

16. Continuing Candidates (enrolled prior to 1st Jan 2017)

As of 1st January 2017, eligible candidates who were previously awarded an RTS (Research Training Scheme) Place were transitioned to an RTP Fee-offset scholarship and candidates in receipt of an APA were transferred to an RTP Stipend Scholarship.

Notification of the transition, the period of support via RTP Stipend and/or RTP Fee-offset and estimated contribution amounts were communicated to all impacted candidates in December 2016.

All conditions within this policy apply to candidates transferred to these scholarships.

Supporting Documents

• HDR Candidate Selection Policy RS1930
• Selection and Awarding of Scholarships Procedure RS1931
• Selection and Awarding of HDR Place Procedure RS1932
Responsibility

- Enter the title of the person or committee (as the Approval Authority) responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of this policy and its accompanying procedure/s – Professor Leigh Sullivan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation
- Enter the title of the person or committee (as the Policy Sponsor) responsible for maintaining the content of this policy as delegated by the (title above) – Professor Caroline Finch, Dean Graduate Studies
- Enter the title of the person responsible for the administration support for the maintenance of this policy as directed by the (title above) – Ms Lauren Quinlan, Research Integrity & Policy Coordinator

Promulgation

The Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship Policy will be communicated throughout the University community in the form of:

1. an Announcement Notice via FedNews website and on the ‘Recently Approved Documents’ page on the ‘Policies, Procedures and Forms @ the University’ website to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. distribution of e-mails to Head of School / Head of Department / University staff; and/or
3. Notification to Schools

Implementation

The Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship Policy will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. an Announcement Notice via FedNews website and on the ‘Recently Approved Documents’ page on the ‘Policies, Procedures and Forms @ the University’ website to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. Training sessions