

HDR Candidate Procedure

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Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the expectations and responsibilities of University staff and Higher Degree by Research candidates during application, admission, candidature and examination. The procedure

stipulates the compulsory actions, milestones of candidature and provides guidance regarding candidature matters, including the management of leave and examination of theses.

Scope

This procedure applies to all higher degree by research candidature applicants, enrolled candidates, and persons with supervisory or administrative responsibilities for HDR candidates, candidature applications and theses examination.

Legislative context

- [Federation University Australia Act 2010](#)
- [The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 \(TEQSA Act\)](#)
- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)
- [Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines Research 2017](#)

Definitions

Term	Definition
Candidate	Student enrolled in a higher degree by research course.
Confirmation of Candidature (CoC)	Milestone by which a candidate confirms that their research project is viable and is approved by the CoC panel to continue their project.
Deferment	A period of up to 12 months, normally covering the academic year, before a student, who has been offered a place in a higher education course, enrolls in that course.
Designated Cohort	An approved group of potential applicants, identified as having common characteristics (such as completion of a particular qualification) for the purposes of gaining special entry.
DGRS	Dean, Graduate Research School – academic staff member responsible for overseeing HDR courses, HDR candidates and supervisors.
EFTSL	Estimated full time study load.
Employee	Any staff member employed by FedUni to undertake academic activity, including permanent, fixed term contract, casual, honorary and adjunct appointments.
Enrolment	The process by which a person, having received a written offer of a place, shall register their course and unit of study with Federation University.
GRS	Graduate Research School
GRSB	Graduate Research School Board
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
HDR Course	One of the following courses of study: Masters Degree Research, Doctoral Degree (Research), or Doctoral Degree (Professional).

HDR candidate	A Federation student enrolled in a Masters Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Research), or Doctoral Degree (Professional).
HDRC	Higher Degree by Research Coordinator
IELTS	International English Language Testing System.
Institute	Academic unit of FedUni
Leave from studies	Period of either six or 12 months, covering a normal teaching period(s), where an enrolled student is excused from formal study.
Offer	Offer of Admission to Candidature – The written offer provided to an applicant for admission to a HDR course.
Off-campus candidate	Where a candidate studies from a location other than on campus or an approved external facility
Principal Supervisor	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 of a HDR candidate's research.
Associate Supervisor	A staff member of FedUni who meets the requirements of and has been approved for inclusion to the Register of Supervisors as a supervisor and provides support to a HDR candidate and to the Principal Supervisor.
Co-Supervisor	An individual who is external to FedUni who meets the requirements of and has been approved for inclusion to the Register of Supervisors as a supervisor and provides support to the candidate and to the Principal Supervisor.
Probationary candidate	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.
Provisional Principal Supervisor	A staff member who does not meet the requirements to be listed as a principal supervisor on the Register of Supervisors but has the support of their School to act as a principal supervisor under the guidance of a mentor who is registered as a Principal Supervisor.
RTP (Research Training Program)	Federal Government funding scheme that enables the provision of higher degree by research fee offset and stipend scholarships.
Stipend	A fortnightly scholarship paid to a candidate to cover living expenses.
Scholarship Program	A scholarship or cluster of scholarships that share attributes, strategic alignment, and/or industry engagement
Candidate / Supervisor agreement	Formal written agreement outlining meeting methods,
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency

1. Requirements of the Degrees

This procedure sets out the requirements and conditions for Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Philosophy and Masters by Research degrees at Federation University. Reference to Master/s degree within this document refers specifically to higher degree by research qualifications.

Coursework degrees that include a research component (for example, Honours degrees, Graduate Certificate in Research) are governed by the [Students and Support for Students Policy](#).

1.1 The Doctor of Philosophy

The Doctor of Philosophy is an Australian Qualifications Framework AQF 10 qualification, completed solely by research. Graduates must demonstrate through practice and production of a thesis / exegesis, expert, specialised cognitive, technical, and research skills in a discipline area to independently and systematically:

- engage in critical reflection, synthesis, and evaluation,
- develop, adapt, and implement research methodologies to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice,
- disseminate and promote new insights to peers and the community, and
- generate original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to a discipline or area of professional practice.

Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or scholar.

1.2 The Master of Philosophy and other Masters by Research degrees

The Master of Philosophy and other Masters by Research Degrees are AQF 9 qualifications, completed solely by research. Graduates must demonstrate through practice and production of a thesis / exegesis, expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently:

- analyse critically, reflect on, and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories,
- research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice, and
- interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.

2. Application and admission

2.1 Application for a HDR place

Applications to Federation University HDR courses must be submitted in accordance with the method and evidence outlined on the Federation University website. Prior to applying, applicants should discuss the following with a potential supervisor aligned to their intended research:

- the process of applying to Federation University,
- the requirements of the degree,
- their suitability for admission, and
- an appropriate research topic.

Applications for admission to candidature will be accepted at any time of the year.

2.2 Admission to candidature and minimum entry requirements

An Offer of Admission to Candidature is based upon the following:

- meeting minimum entry requirements,
- availability of RTP fee-offset scholarship places,
- availability of discipline-appropriate and experienced supervisors with adequate workload provisions,
- availability of adequate resources to support the research project,
- applicant or project not being subject to sanctions,
- confirmation, where appropriate, that the research proposal is the original work of the applicant, and
- other factors such as strategic research directions.

Offers of Admission to Candidature are subject to the approval of the Dean, Graduate Research School. Meeting the entry requirements to a degree does not guarantee admission. For an Offer of Admission to Candidature to be issued, supervisors must be registered and demonstrate that they have: relevant experience within the discipline of the research topic, familiarity with the proposed research methods, and the available supervision workload. Experience must be demonstrated by peer-reviewed publications in a related area, award of grants in a related area, or other relevant research experience within the last five years.

Where a proposed research topic is in an emerging multi-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary field of research, the supervisory team must show how their combined research experience enables them to adequately supervise the candidate.

Conditions may be imposed on an offer of probationary candidature, as deemed appropriate by the Dean, Graduate Research School and will be recorded in the Offer of Admission to Candidature.

Admission will also be consistent with the assessment of any overseas qualification by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).

Where an application may be subject to Sanctions Laws, the actions described in the [Sanctions Compliance Procedure](#) must be followed.

2.3 English language requirements

An international applicant who does not hold a valid passport from and is not a citizen of, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand or the Republic of Ireland must provide the required evidence of a satisfactory level of competence in oral and written English as specified by the Academic Board:

- IELTS (International Language Testing System) (or equivalent) minimum score of 6.5 with no band less than 6.0; or equivalent, as presented on the Federation University English Language Requirements web page.

English language proficiency exemption requests will only be considered where applicants meet criteria outlined on the [Department of Home Affairs](#) website.

2.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Applicants

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants who do not meet entry requirements may be considered for entry by the Dean, Graduate Research School, in consultation with relevant staff from the proposed affiliated Institute or Research Centre.

Variations to the conditions of candidature may be included in an Offer for Admission to Candidature, such as:

- extending the standard period of candidature for the degree in which the candidate is enrolled,

- extending the standard period of stipend payment for the degree in which the candidate is enrolled.
- offering merit based Indigenous HDR stipend/s for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to undertake full-time or part-time HDR studies.

2.5 Institutional transfer

HDR candidates from other institutions may apply to transfer their candidature to Federation University. Applicants requesting transfer to Federation University should follow the standard admission process, as described on the Federation University website, and must meet all selection requirements as per the [Research and Research Training Policy](#). Applicants will be required to supply:

- a letter from their prior institute outlining the course of study, title of the research project and the amount of Equivalent Full Time Student Load (EFTSL) consumed.

Where a candidate is requesting to transfer ethics approval and /or where their project has been confirmed by their previous institute, they must also provide:

- evidence of completed milestones, such as confirmation of candidature, where there is a request to waive these requirements at Federation University, and
- evidence of existing ethics approval, and a copy of the approved ethics application as well as any approved amendments. Transfer is subject to approval by the Federation University Ethics Committee.

Requests to waive confirmation of candidature or other required milestones based on work undertaken at the previous enrolling institution must be supported by documentation from the previous enrolling institution and approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School at Federation University.

The period of enrolment at the previous institution will be deducted from the usual period of candidature at Federation University. Transfer to Federation University will not usually be allowed for candidates who have completed more than two years, or part time equivalent, of a doctoral course or six months, or part time equivalent, of a masters course.

2.6 Establishing a case for Honours Equivalence for entry to PhD and Masters degrees

Applicants for PhD and Masters courses must demonstrate that they have previously undertaken research and generated outputs in a cognate discipline to their proposed research project, which is equivalent to an Australian honours-level course in terms of both quantity and quality. This will require an applicant to have undertaken research or research-related activity that is deemed to be equivalent in research training preparedness, to completion of an Australian Honours Degree at AQF 8, as evidenced by peer reviewed publications, prior academic qualifications and/or professional research experience.

Applicants can support their case by providing evidence such as transcripts of achieved qualifications, awards or prizes based on research outcomes and evidence of involvement in the production of refereed publications or other appropriate research outputs including work related activities.

A case for honours equivalence (i.e. research preparedness) must demonstrate that the applicant has, through study, research experience, professional experience, or a combination of these areas, developed:

- cognitive skills to review, analyse, consolidate, and synthesise knowledge to identify and provide solutions to complex problems with intellectual independence,
- cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of a body of knowledge and theoretical concepts with advanced understanding in some areas,
- cognitive skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in developing new understanding,

- technical skills to design and use research in a project, and
- communication skills to present a clear and coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences.

And will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:

- with initiative and judgement in professional practice and/or scholarship,
- to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts,
- with responsibility and accountability for own learning and practice and in collaboration with others within broad parameters, and
- to plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship with some independence.

2.6.1 A case for honours equivalence based on peer reviewed publications, reports, or exhibitions of creative work

Where peer reviewed publications, reports or exhibitions of creative work are used to build a case for honours equivalence, the application should include copies of such work, a statement of the applicant's contribution to the work, detail regarding the type of publication, and evidence of peer review. Consideration will be given to the reputation and quality of journals and to the peer review process. Generally, where an honours equivalence case rests on one or more peer reviewed publications, such publications should appear in ranked journals for the case to be successful. If an individual's admission to a degree course is based on one or more publications, those same publications cannot be used in their thesis for that degree.

2.6.2 A Case for honours equivalence based on qualifications

Where an applicant is applying for honours equivalence based on previous academic qualifications, the requirements for honours equivalence are:

- the previous qualification must be, or be equivalent to, an AQF 8 or 9 degree with at least 50% of the total credit points in one year of enrolment derived from research-related coursework; and
- the previous qualification must include a substantial research project, assessment of which involves the production of a thesis of at least 12,000 words or equivalent (e.g., exegesis plus creative works).

Or equivalent to these clauses.

Eligibility for a higher degree by research course will be based on the results relating to research specific units or courses undertaken in their qualifying degree, as per the below table:

GPA (%)	Honours equivalence	HDR Course Eligibility
80	First class honours	Doctoral Degree
75 - 79	Second class honours, upper A division	Doctoral Degree
70 - 74	Second class honours, lower A division	Master of Philosophy
60 - 69	Second class honours, B division	Master of Philosophy
60	Third class honours	Not eligible for entry

2.6.3 A case for honours equivalence based on professional research experience

Where research has been undertaken in the course of employment, or other research-related activity, the following evidence can be used to make the case that the quantity and quality of research experience is equivalent to an Australian Honours degree and sufficient to meet entry requirements:

- type and length of employment in a research related position,
- duties and activities undertaken in the course of employment,
- evidence of peer-reviewed publications or reports produced in relation to employment or activity,
- evidence of exhibitions or publications of creative work with peer review,
- evidence of awards or prizes received, and
- membership and/or evidence of continuing professional development from a professional body.

2.6.4 Honours Equivalence for Federation University Courses

Federation University courses by coursework that include significant research components, can be recognised as honours equivalent. Subject to satisfactory completion of the required courses, graduates of these courses will be deemed to meet honours equivalence and therefore eligible for an offer of probationary candidature in a HDR course.

2.7 Deferral

Candidates may request to defer their commencement for up to one year, with permission of their principal supervisor. Stipend holders should refer to the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#). Processes for deferment are described in the [Higher Education Deferral or Leave from Studies Procedure](#).

2.8 Readmission

Where a candidate requests to recommence their study in a research course after a period of withdrawal or candidature lapse, they will be required to apply for readmission. Where the period of withdrawal or lapse was greater than 12 months, or where the candidate was initially enrolled more than 10 calendar years ago, if accepted the candidate will be treated as a new candidate and required to abide by the conditions of candidature as described in this document.

3. Enrolment

3.1 Allocated periods of candidature

The standard allocated periods of candidature for HDR courses are defined as:

- three years full time or part time equivalent for PhD candidates, or
- eighteen months full time or part time equivalent for Master/s candidates.

Candidates may apply for an extension to the allocated period of candidature for PhD and Master/s degrees, as per Section 6.9.

Periods of candidature may be paused during periods of leave from studies, as per Section 6.8. The minimum period of candidature for a PhD or Master/s candidate is 12 months.

Regardless of periods of Leave from Study or fraction of enrolment, all candidates must complete their degree within ten calendar years from the date of initial enrolment, as per Federation University Australia (Students) Regulation 2022, Division 6.

3.2 Primary Location of study

Candidates may study on-campus, off-campus or from an external site. Candidates in receipt of a stipend scholarship should refer to their terms and conditions, as some stipends may require candidates to study on-campus or from a specific location.

3.2.1 On-campus candidature

On-campus candidates primarily study at a University campus, centre, precinct, or location listed on their Offer of Admission to Candidature. International candidates must study on-campus for at least 75% of each academic year.

3.2.2 Off-campus candidature

Candidates may study online, or off campus (including from home) provided they have the approval of their Principal Supervisor and the Dean, Graduate Research School to conduct their research at a distance.

International candidates located within Australia and holding a student visa must study on campus or from a specified location, such as an external laboratory, as indicated on their Letter of Offer. International candidates cannot elect to enrol off-campus.

3.2.3 External candidature

Where a candidate is working from a primary location such as an external laboratory or industry related site, or offshore partner institution, an agreement must be jointly signed by the Dean, Graduate Research School and a representative of the external site. The agreement must cover, but is not limited to:

- occupational health and safety training relevant to the research location,
- agreement on ownership of intellectual property,
- any site-specific requirements for the candidate,
- use, ownership and storage of materials and data, and
- clarification on publication of papers resulting from the research including authorship, author affiliations, and embargoes.

3.3 Enrolment and enrolment variation

HDR candidates are required to enrol in each semester of study in their course and unit at their approved fraction and location, as per the [Students and Support for Students Policy](#). Candidates may apply to the University to change enrolment fraction from full time to part time, or part time to full time stating the reasons for the requested change. Applications for change to conditions of candidature must be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee). Candidates requesting a change from full-time to part-time candidature, who hold a stipend, may be required to relinquish the stipend. These candidates should refer to the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#).

3.4 Designated Cohorts

Designated cohorts are designed to facilitate entry and establish support for a cohort of candidates with similar attributes, skills and/or knowledge.

Applications for a designated cohort must be submitted to the Graduate Research School Board, through the Dean, Graduate Research School, to create special or reduced entry requirements for a cohort of candidates entering a higher degree by research course. The application must be sponsored by an academic unit. Application is made under the designated cohort process and is outlined in the HDR Candidate Guidelines.

4. Candidature

4.1 Hours of study

To complete a HDR course within the period of candidature, the University expects full-time HDR candidates to study towards their degree for an average of 38 hours per week over the life of the degree. The expectation for part-time candidates is at least 50% of the full-time load.

4.2 Employment

Candidates in receipt of a stipend scholarship must refer to the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#) for further information. Some limitations may apply to employment where a candidate is in receipt of a stipend.

There is no limit to the number of hours candidates can undertake paid employment, however paid employment commitments during the period of candidature will not be accepted as grounds for an extension of either candidature or scholarship. International candidates should check their student visa regarding limitations on working arrangements and hours. Candidates with stipend scholarships are encouraged to meet with their supervisor to discuss work arrangements and study commitments.

International student visa holders should refer to their visa conditions regarding undertaking paid employment.

4.3 Concurrent Enrolment

Candidates may only enrol in another degree or diploma during their candidature where they have demonstrated satisfactory progress in their HDR course and with the approval of their Principal Supervisor and Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee).

4.4 Orientation and Induction

Newly enrolled candidates will be offered a range of induction and orientation activities as detailed below. Where a candidate's primary location is off-campus or external, online induction alternatives may be offered, however candidates should attend in person where they can.

4.4.1 Skills Development Program Induction

Candidates must complete the prescribed HDR Orientation Seminar outlined in the HDR Skills Development Program (SDP). This will normally include an overview of HDR and research-related policy, procedure and expectations and information on codes of conduct, integrity and ethics, intellectual property, and other research-related issues.

4.4.2 Local and OHS Induction

All candidates must participate in the following induction activities relevant to their location and discipline:

- the University Occupational Health and Safety Induction, and
- Local Induction as outlined in the Induction Procedure.

4.4.3 Research Integrity Induction

Candidates are required to successfully complete the Federation University approved Research Integrity module prior to attempting confirmation.

4.4.4 Candidate / Supervisor Agreement

Candidates and supervisors are required to complete and submit the Candidate / Supervisor agreement to the Graduate Research School within the first four weeks of candidature.

4.4.5 Academic Plan

Candidates and supervisors are required to complete and submit the Academic Plan to the Graduate Research School within the first eight weeks of candidature.

4.4.6 International student induction

International candidates must participate in an International Student Orientation session administered by the Global Professional School.

4.5 Prescribed sessions of the HDR Skills Development Program

Candidates must complete prescribed sessions of the HDR Skills Development Program in each year of candidature. Compulsory modules to be completed prior to attempting confirmation are described in the Skills Development Program online resources. Requirements will be communicated to candidates during the Skills Development Program Induction. Cases for recognition of prior learning and experience will be considered and must be provided to the Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee).

4.6 Minimum Resources

The acceptance of a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidate by the University indicates that there are finances, space, supervision, and other required resources available to support the candidate through to timely completion.

The support provided by the Graduate Research School and the relevant Research Centre (or equivalent) will be supplemented by the provision of University services including the Library and Information Technology Services.

The minimum level of resources/services provided by the University for all HDR candidates who are undertaking their course are listed below. On-campus, part-time candidates may be required to share some resources, where appropriate.

Laptops and other equipment purchased throughout the duration of candidature remain the property of Federation University and must be returned prior to the completion of the degree. Where a graduate does not return the required equipment, finalisation of their degree may be delayed.

Where a candidate chooses to use their own electronic device, they may not be provided with the same level of IT support or access to university systems and software owned or licensed by the University.

Candidates must return their University purchased laptop and other equipment in accordance with their funding arrangements. Letters of completion may be withheld where equipment has not been returned.

4.6.1 Physical Facilities / Resources - on-campus

At a minimum, on-campus candidates should be provided with access to:

- a desk and chair located in an appropriate university space,
- access to a University computer or laptop appropriate to the research needs of the topic,
- access to available university systems and software,
- reasonable access to stationery, photocopying, internet, and postal services,
- reasonable after-hours access to facilities, and
- other resources identified as essential to a particular candidate's research course (e.g., scientific, and technical equipment, laboratory or studio facilities).

4.6.2 Resources - for off-campus and external candidates

At a minimum, off-campus and external candidates will be provided with:

- email address,
- access to a University computer or laptop appropriate to the research needs of the topic, and
- access to available university systems and software.

Where a candidate undertakes all or part of their candidature from an approved external location, the Graduate Research School, Principal Supervisor and relevant Research Centre (or equivalent) must ensure that the candidate has access to resources and facilities appropriate to the research course.

4.6.3 Financial Support

Candidates are provided with financial support to support their research projects via a Research Allowance administered by the Graduate Research School; the amount provided will be determined by the Graduate Research School Board.

The Graduate Research School must advise candidates of the estimated amount of financial support they will receive in their Offer of Admission to Candidature

The HDR Funding Rules provide guidance and further information on how the Research Allowance can be spent.

4.7 Research Environment

Research Centres and supervisory teams should provide candidates with information about the resources available to help facilitate the timely completion of a quality research project and have the opportunity to engage with scholarly communities both within the university and globally.

5. Research projects incorporating Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, practices, places, and/or cultural knowledge.

For projects involving Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, practices, places, and/or cultural knowledge, candidates and supervisory teams must comply with the most recent version of the following documents, as indicated in the [Research and Research Training Policy](#):

- *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*;
- *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders and Keeping research on track 11*; and
- *CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance*.

Where a candidate is undertaking research in a related area and does not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, the candidate and supervisory team should carefully consider the scope and purpose of the project and engage with appropriate community members in developing the research. The candidate and the supervisory team should consider and recognise the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them, and:

- recognise, value, and respect the diversity, heritage, knowledge, cultural property and connection to land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,
- engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to research being undertaken, so that they freely make decisions about their involvement, and
- report to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the outcomes of research in which they have engaged.

6. Candidature and Milestones

All candidates are required to participate in compulsory milestones, where requested by the University. At a minimum, candidates who hold a student visa must complete at least two compulsory milestones each year and all other candidates must complete at least one compulsory milestone each calendar year.

6.1 Milestone Panels

It is expected that the same panel will assess Confirmation of Candidature and the Mid-Candidature Review milestones, where possible.

Each panel should comprise of:

- the HDR Coordinator (Chair) or nominee,
- the Principal Supervisor,
- two academic staff members with relevant disciplinary experience and knowledge,
 - for PhD panels, one expert should be external to the University.
- an industry partner, where appropriate, and
- Indigenous community member/s, where appropriate.

The Principal Supervisor and Panel Chair should ensure that no conflict of interest exists between panel members and the candidate, or otherwise declared and managed consistent with university procedures. Supervisors should consult the Australian Council of Graduate Research's Guidelines for [Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research](#), which provides assistance in identifying major and minor types of conflict.

6.2 Confirmation of Candidature

Admission to HDR candidature is on a probationary basis, and candidature must be confirmed as follows:

- PhD candidates: within the first 9 months of full-time enrolment, or part time equivalent.
- Masters candidates: within the first 6 months of full-time enrolment, or part time equivalent.
- Master/s candidates requesting to convert to PhD candidature must follow the requirements of PhD confirmation of candidature within nine months.

For candidature to be confirmed, the Candidate must demonstrate to a panel that:

- a viable research course has been developed,
- satisfactory progress has been made,
- ethical and research integrity considerations have been considered, for example:
 - Indigenous IP and cultural awareness have been addressed (where appropriate),
 - there is a plan for the ethical use of AI (where appropriate),
- the degree requirements can be completed within the approved candidature period, as per section 3.1.

The confirmation of candidature process and requirements are described in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).

Failure to confirm within the required timeframes may impact on candidate scholarships or support, as advised in the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#).

For projects involving Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, practices, places, and/or cultural knowledge, the confirmation of candidature panel should include at least one member of an appropriate Indigenous community. This person may also be recognised as a discipline or cultural expert depending on the nature of the proposed research and their position within the community.

The Milestone Panel will recommend to the University one of the following outcomes:

- Confirmed.
- Confirmed subject to conditions - candidate must meet conditions within eight weeks to be confirmed or part-time equivalent.
- Confirmation deferred - the candidate will be required to attempt confirmation again within 12 weeks or part-time equivalent.
- Not confirmed - the candidate will be required to 'show cause' (as per section 6.3 Show cause) why candidature should not be terminated.

6.3 Progress Reports

6.3.1 Mid-Candidature Review

The Mid-Candidature Review will normally be completed approximately 12 months after Confirmation of Candidature milestone. The Mid-Candidature Review is designed to ensure that the candidate is progressing satisfactorily, to provide feedback on the quality of the candidate work and identify any barriers or need for intervention to continue to support the candidate to timely completion.

The mid-candidature review template comprises of three sections:

1. The Candidate Section
2. The Supervisors' Section
3. The Milestone Panel Recommendation Section

Candidates will be required to prepare the Candidate Section, which comprises:

1. a report of approximately 1500-2000 words on their progress to date, including:
 - A summary of progress against goals/timeline that were provided at confirmation of candidature.
 - Updated timeline.
 - Summary of changes made to the project since confirmation of candidature, and/or further changes that are planned.
 - Information about barriers/challenges experienced by the candidate that have impacted or are anticipated to impact progress.
 - Information about satisfaction with supervision arrangements, resourcing, research environment.
 - Whether and how AI has been used in the research project to date, and whether and how it will be used to support the project in future.
2. a sample of their written work, such as a draft chapter, report, published or unpublished manuscript intended for the thesis. The sample does not need to be a final draft but should be indicative of the candidate's writing skills and should be at least 70% complete.
3. A completion plan, demonstrating timely and realistic completion of their project.

Candidates will be provided with an opportunity to submit a confidential report, as per Section 6.3.3 Confidential Reports.

The supervisory team will be asked to complete the Supervisors' Section, detailing:

1. Student progress since Confirmation of Candidature, any changes or challenges to the project.
2. Comment on candidate's completion plan
3. Recommendation (as per Section 6.2.4, Progress Report Outcomes)

The Candidate Section and the Supervisors' Section will be assessed by the Milestone Panel, and an overall recommendation as per section 6.2.4, Progress Report Outcomes will be given

6.3.2 Annual and Interim Progress Reports

All nominated candidates are required to participate in a Progress Report where requested by the University. Candidates may be nominated to complete a progress report where they are exempt from other milestones, or:

- hold an international student visa,
- are identified as 'At Risk' in one or more previous progress reports,
- have consumed the maximum period of candidature, or
- are nominated by their supervisor or Dean, Graduate Research School.

When completing an Annual or an Interim Progress Report, candidates will be asked to report on:

- their research progress since their last report,
- their research work plan for the next 12 months, or on completion (whichever is sooner),
- a self-assessment on issues that have impacted their progress, and
- other matters related to their research / supervision.

It is recommended that candidates meet with their Principal Supervisor or supervisory team prior to completing the Progress Report. Candidates will also be provided with the opportunity to submit a Confidential Report directly to the Graduate Research School.

Where a candidate is not enrolled or has submitted their thesis for examination, they are not required to participate in progress reporting.

6.3.3 Confidential Reports

Candidates may submit a confidential report to the Graduate Research School during the progress reporting and Mid-Candidature Review cycle, or at any time via email. Confidential reports will be administered by the HDR Team and HDR Coordinator and provided to the Dean, Graduate Research School. Confidential reports will not be provided to, or discussed with, supervisors or other staff unless the candidate grants permission. Where a conflict of interest exists with a HDR Coordinator, the confidential report will be directed to an alternate HDR Coordinator, or Deputy Dean, Graduate Research School. Where a conflict of interest exists with either the Dean or the Deputy Dean, Graduate Research School, confidential reports will be handled by the alternate Dean, or provided to the PVC RI (or nominee).

6.3.4 Progress report and review outcomes

The Principal Supervisor and Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee) must review Annual and Interim Progress Reports and Mid-Candidature Reviews and recommend one of the following outcomes:

- Satisfactory Progress: the candidate is making sufficient progress to complete their research course by the approved submission date.
- Action Required: the candidate is making progress however, action is required by the Research Centre, supervisory team or candidate to ensure timely completion. An intervention strategy should be developed to support the continued progress of the candidate.
- At Risk: The candidate is at risk of not completing their course by the approved submission date or to the required standard, and an intervention strategy is required.
- Show Cause: the candidate has not made sufficient progress and is required to demonstrate as to why their candidature should not be terminated.

Candidates who have been placed At Risk will be required to meet with their Principal Supervisor or supervision team to complete an intervention strategy. An intervention strategy is strongly recommended for candidates who receive an Action Required outcome. The strategy must set out the next six months of activity to ensure that the research project will be completed by the approved submission date. A copy of the intervention strategies must be provided to the Graduate Research School.

If a candidate is placed At Risk on two or more consecutive occasions, they may be asked to Show Cause.

6.4 Intervention and Support Actions Plans

Where a supervisor and/or Higher Degree by Research Coordinator (HDRC) indicate that a candidate is either at risk of not completing on time, or that action is required to support the candidate, a [Support Action Plan](#) (SAP) may be put in place. The Plan is used to set out the next six months of activity to ensure that the research project gets back on track.

Support Action Plans may also be used by supervisors and candidates to assist them in planning the next phase of a candidate's project, to ensure the project stays on track for submission by the thesis approved submission date.

6.5 Show Cause

A candidate may be required to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated in any of the following instances:

- two or more consecutive Annual Progress Reports indicate that they are At Risk,
- candidature is not confirmed at the end of the probationary period of enrolment,

- on recommendation of the Dean or nominee,
- refusal to participate in a compulsory milestone or requirements of candidature,
- maximum period of candidature has been reached, or
- failure to meet the requirements of the Skills Development Program.

Any request to undertake Show Cause processes must be supported by sufficient written evidence from the supervisory team or relevant parties.

Candidates who are required to show cause will be notified in writing via email to their Federation University email and postal address. Details regarding the Show Cause process can be found in the HDR Candidate Guidelines. Candidates are required to provide a written submission detailing why their candidature should not be terminated. Where a report is not provided by the candidate, candidature will be terminated. Applications for Leave from Studies will not normally be considered once a candidate has been identified as having to Show Cause.

A Show Cause Committee (SCC) convened by the Dean, Graduate Research School will consider the candidate's show cause submission and details of candidature, and make one of the following recommendations:

- a. Candidate's progress is satisfactory,
- b. Candidate's enrolment for the degree is terminated, or
- c. Candidate's enrolment for the degree continues, with conditions.

The Chair of the SCC will formally advise the candidate of the decision and the process for appeal via their Federation email address and postal address.

6.6 Ethics Approval

Research projects and practices must conform to the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and to accepted community standards. Any research involving human subjects must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee. Any research involving animals must be approved by the Animal Ethics Committee. Ethics applications for HDR research projects must be submitted by the Principal Supervisor who should be named as the Chief Investigator; however, candidates should be involved in preparing the application; and aware of their responsibilities. Where a project has ethics approval and the Principal Supervisor changes during candidature, this change should be reflected in an Amendment Request to the relevant ethics committee.

Where projects involve research involving humans or animals, data cannot be collected before formal ethics approval has been granted. Any data collected before such approval cannot be presented in the thesis or published in the University's name. Ethics project approval codes are generally required to publish data.

6.7 Internships

Candidates are encouraged to undertake a research internship, which is defined as a position with a [research end-user](#) where a candidate undertakes research and development related to their project.

Where a candidate is undertaking an internship from an external location, they are considered an external candidate for the duration of the internship and section 3.2.3 External Candidature applies. Candidates should be aware of any constraints or implications relating to their internship, and in particular the generation of IP and its ownership, and the use of that work in their thesis.

All research internships must be supported with an agreement with the research end user, whether they are undertaken on site or via distance, are paid or unpaid.

6.7.1 Enrolment during an internship

If there is a financial component of the agreement where the candidate will receive a stipend like payment via the University, the candidate must remain enrolled for the duration of the internship. In this case, their candidature may be extended, subject to section 6.9, for the same period as the internship, but not more than the maximum period of candidature for their degree.

Where a candidate undertakes an unpaid internship, they may take leave from studies to participate in this arrangement. Candidates on an international student visa may not take leave to participate in an internship, paid or unpaid.

6.8 Student Evaluation of the Postgraduate program Survey (SEPP)

The Student Evaluation of the Postgraduate Program (SEPP) is an evaluation by the candidate of the HDR course and is used to provide continuing improvements to the academic quality and candidate experience. All HDR candidates are encouraged to complete the SEPP; responses are anonymous. HDR candidates are invited to complete an evaluation annually until they submit their thesis/portfolio for examination.

6.9 Leave from Studies and Leave of Absence

Leave of absence entitlements do not extend scholarship or candidature periods. Candidates have access to the following leave of absence entitlements:

- Recreation Leave: 20 working days of 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 scholarship entitlements.
- Sick Leave: up to 20 working days of sick leave per year. This may be accrued and carried forward, but entitlements are forfeited on cessation of candidature.

Candidates may access additional leave entitlements as assigned to Academic and General Staff, with the exception of Leave without Pay and Long Service Leave. Such leave entitlements include the following, none of which extend the period of candidature or scholarship entitlements:

- Compassionate/Bereavement Leave.
- Jury Service.
- Domestic Violence Leave.

Candidates should refer to the [People and Culture website](#) for further details regarding these types of leave.

Paid periods of leave are available for stipend holders, and can be viewed in the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#).

A candidate may apply for Leave from Studies extending for at least one teaching period (six months) and up to one year. Leave from Studies periods pause candidature and stipend payments, where relevant, for the duration of the leave. The period of candidature is extended by the period of leave.

Leave from Study for periods between four weeks and six months will only be considered where there are extenuating circumstances, and appropriate documentation (e.g. medical certificates) are provided.

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 approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee).

Full leave entitlements are described in the Guidelines.

6.10 Extension of Candidature

Under exceptional circumstances, candidates can request an extension to candidature of up to six months, or part time equivalent, subject to the approval of the Dean, Graduate Research School.

PhD candidates may request a second extension to candidature 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.

Requests for extension to candidature must be submitted at least four weeks prior to the approved submission date. Candidates who do not submit their thesis or request an extension to candidature prior to their approved submission date will be considered as having lapsed candidature and section 6.16 of this procedure will apply.

Extensions to scholarships are considered separately from extensions to candidature. Extensions to scholarship, including fee scholarships, are described in the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#)

6.11 Change of thesis title

A candidate may request a change to the title of their research project (and therefore their thesis). Requests for change of thesis title must be approved by the candidate's Principal Supervisor and submitted to the Graduate Research School.

Candidates who are impacted by [UN or Australian Sanctions](#) may be required to seek Government permission to change thesis title. A change in thesis title may occur without significant change to the research project.

6.12 Significant change of research project

Project scope should be decided leading up to confirmation of candidature. Subsequent significant changes to the research project should be avoided where practicable.

A significant change to the research project which occurs after Confirmation of Candidature must be approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School. Reasons for the change must be compelling and show that suitable supervision and other required resources remain available for the new research topic. There will be no extension to the total duration of candidature arising from these changes. Where there has been a significant alteration to the candidate's research questions, the research project may require the candidate to undertake the Confirmation of Candidature process again as determined by Graduate Research School Board.

Candidates who are impacted by [UN or Australian Sanctions](#) may be required to seek Government permission to change projects.

6.13 Conversion from a Masters by Research or Master of Philosophy to a PhD course

Candidates enrolled in a Master/s degree may apply to transfer to a PhD course. Master/s candidates will be required to undertake the Confirmation of Candidature steps as outlined in the HDR Candidate Guidelines for PhD probationary candidates.

Where a candidate has already confirmed into a Master/s degree, and requests to transfer to a PhD, they must demonstrate that their project is appropriate for a doctoral degree. This may be through undertaking the PhD confirmation of candidature process.

If a candidate transfers from a Master/s degree to a PhD, the total period of candidature will be up to three years from the date that the candidate commenced the master's degree. There will be no extension to the total period of candidature arising from transfer from Masters to PhD.

Applications for transfer between courses must be endorsed by the Dean, Graduate Research School.

6.14 Conversion from PhD to a Master of Philosophy course

Transfers from a PhD to a Master of Philosophy degree will generally be considered where an extension for candidature has not already been approved. Where a candidate has exceeded the period of candidature allowable for a Master/s (18 months), 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 courses must be approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School.

6.15 Withdrawal from Studies

Information on withdrawing from candidature is in the [Students and Support for Students Policy](#).

6.16 Readmission to candidature after withdrawal

Readmission to HDR candidature after withdrawal may be considered where support from the Principal Supervisor and Dean, Graduate Research School exists. Candidates must readmit to the same course within 12 months of withdrawing

Where a candidate withdrew having consumed the maximum period of candidature, they must submit their thesis within the semester of readmitted enrolment.

6.17 Lapse of Candidature

A candidate will be regarded as having abandoned their course of study and their candidature will lapse under one or more of the following circumstances:

- failure to re-enrol, with no response to communication from the University,
- taking unapproved leave,
- failing to return from leave without having sought approval for additional leave,
- failing to participate in a required progress review and failing to respond to reasonable requests to do so, or
- where the Dean, Graduate Research School recommends lapse of candidature.

Following a lapse of candidature, within the first twelve months, re-admission is possible under certain circumstances. Applications for readmission to candidature must be endorsed by the Principal Supervisor and approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School.

7. Integrity, IP, publications, and data management

Candidates, supervisors and all other parties should refer to Federation University's [Research and Research Training Policy](#) and associated procedures for guidance in these areas. The candidature management guidelines also provide information on this area.

7.1 Intellectual Property, Moral Rights and Commercialisation

Candidates should be aware of the University's policy relating to intellectual property, moral rights, and commercialisation prior to undertaking research.

7.2 Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) Rights

Federation University acknowledges the ICIP rights of Indigenous peoples to own, control, maintain, protect and develop their ICIP in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In relation to any ICIP incorporated in the intellectual property licensed to Federation University, Federation University agrees:

- that ownership of ICIP remains with the relevant ICIP Rights Holders;
- to respect and adhere to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research if applicable;
- to respect any cultural protocols which may apply to the ICIP, as identified by the student or the relevant ICIP Rights Holders.

7.3 Publications arising from the HDR research project

Federation University and supervisors have a responsibility to assist candidates in understanding authorship and copyright requirements and providing guidance to candidates in publishing their work during candidature and immediately following submission of the thesis for examination.

7.4 Data management

Candidates must be aware of data management and storage requirements, as outlined in the [Research and Research Training Policy](#).

7.5 Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the expectation that academics, students, researchers, and all members of the academic community act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Academic misconduct is activity that involves academic fraud, plagiarism, and any other dishonest conduct to gain academic or general advantage; or conduct that otherwise contravenes the provisions of the University's academic rules, policies, and procedures.

The Academic Integrity Procedure applies to all Federation University staff and students. Breaches of the [Academic Integrity Procedure](#) will be dealt with under the [Student Misconduct Procedure](#).

7.6 Research Integrity

The University adheres to the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), The Code, and requires all researchers, including HDR candidates, HDR supervisors and research managers to be familiar with, and abide by its provisions, and to conduct their research and related tasks in accordance with these provisions and all other relevant legal, regulatory and policy requirements.

The Research Integrity Procedure applies to all Federation University staff and students. Breaches of the Research Integrity Procedure will be dealt with under the [Research Integrity and Misconduct Procedure](#).

As per section 4.4.3, all staff and candidates participating in research activity are required to participate in University endorsed Research Integrity Training.

Advice regarding academic and research misconduct can be sought from the [University Integrity Officer](#).

7.7 Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in student research projects

The use of AI in candidate HDR and Graduate Certificate in Research projects should comply with the University [Artificial Intelligence Guidelines](#), the <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/australias-ai-ethics-principles>, and [GenAI Guidelines for HDR](#). Prior to using GenAI, students must discuss this with their supervisor and/or supervisory panel to ensure adherence to the principles of responsible research. Where AI is used in at any stage of candidature, including in the application process, it must be appropriately acknowledged. Knowingly using generative AI tools, either directly or via third party, to generate any work (paid or unpaid), without proper acknowledgement of the source may be treated as academic and/or research misconduct. Candidates should pay specific attention to data management and data integrity and the use of AI, and ensure they follow University guidelines.

8. The Thesis

8.1 Thesis format and requirements

A HDR thesis submitted for examination must be written in Australian English and be of a high standard of literary presentation, including an accepted referencing system appropriate to the candidate's discipline area.

A HDR thesis must not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other qualification at Federation University or any other institution, nor any material previously published or written by any person (including the candidate), except where due reference is made and appropriate arrangements regarding copyright have been made.

HDR theses must be presented in one of the approved formats:

- Thesis, including:
 - Traditional thesis (without publication(s))
 - Thesis with publication(s)
- Practical works and an exegesis, including:
 - Traditional exegesis (without publication(s))
 - Exegesis with publication(s)

Requirements for the format and presentation of theses and exegesises are set out in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).

A Doctoral thesis will usually be:

- a text of not more than 100,000 words reporting original scholarship and research carried out by the candidate under supervision, or
- a major work or collection of works, including but not restricted to visual presentation, literary production, or computer software development, carried out by the candidate under supervision and accompanied by an exegesis of between 20,000 and 40,000 words.

A Masters Research thesis will usually be:

- a text of not more than 50,000 words reporting original scholarship and research carried out by the candidate under supervision, or
- a major work or collection of works, including but not restricted to visual presentation, literary production or computer software development, carried out by the candidate under supervision and accompanied by an exegesis of between 10,000 and 20,000 words.

Thesis word counts do not include appendices or references.

8.2 Acknowledgements in the thesis/exegesis

The thesis/exegesis must include the following acknowledgements and statements, as applicable:

- acknowledgement of financial support, including support provided by the Australian Government as outlined in the [RTP and HDR Scholarship Procedure](#),
- acknowledgements of industry engagement or access to external facilities to undertake the research,
- acknowledgement of the contribution provided by professional editing and proof-reading services,
- acknowledgement of contributions made by individuals to the thesis or research project, and
- use of any large Data Assisted Technologies (DAT) or artificial Intelligence (AI) and language models in work submitted for assessment must be fully acknowledged.
- Where the thesis or exegesis includes published work, or work which is in progress for publication, and which is co-authored, appropriate acknowledgement of other authors' contributions is also required. See below and additional information in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).

8.3 Inclusion of published work and work in progress for publication in the thesis/exegesis

Published work, and work which is in progress for publication, may be included in a thesis or exegesis, with the approval of the supervisory team, provided that relevant advice in this procedure and in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#) is followed.

Published work, and work which is in progress for publication, may be included where:

- the work is substantially that of the candidate
- the work is written during the period of candidature*
- the work is clearly related to the subject matter of the thesis, and contributes to the argument of the thesis**,
- the work fits within a cohesive research narrative, and
- the decision to include the work has been discussed with the supervisory team.
- the candidate has the permission of any co-authors to include the work in the thesis

*Work published or submitted for publication outside of the period of candidature may be included in the thesis/exegesis only where it has not been presented for a previous qualification, either by the current candidate, or by any other person and it has not have been used to gain entry to the current degree, for example as evidence of honours equivalence.

Candidates should also be clearly aware that incorporation of previously published material may only form up to 66% of the thesis/exegesis. The inclusion of previously published work does not exempt candidates from their minimum study period as appropriate to the course being undertaken.

******Where the candidate has published work or has work in progress for publication, written during candidature but ancillary to the thesis/exegesis and not forming part of the core thesis argument, such works may be listed in the thesis and, if desired, included as appendices.

Published work and work which is in progress for publication is defined as:

- unpublished manuscript/s not yet submitted for publication
- manuscript/s submitted for publication
- manuscript/s in revision following peer review
- manuscript/s accepted for publication, or
- published manuscript

in a peer reviewed academic journal, in peer reviewed conference proceedings or in a scholarly book.

Published work and work which is in progress for publication can be described as either 'included publications' or 'included material'.

8.3.1 Included publications:

'Included publications' are published or unpublished manuscripts that are included in their entirety, usually comprising a thesis chapter or a significant part of a thesis chapter. Included publications may require some supplemental text when presented within the thesis/exegesis. Further information is provided in the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#).

8.3.2 Included material:

'Included material' describes excerpts drawn from a published or unpublished manuscript authored or co-authored by the candidate and combined with text that is written specifically for the thesis. Included material should be cited and referenced appropriately, as for any other published work cited in the thesis.

Candidates enrolled before 1st January 2019 should refer to the HDR Candidature Management Policy approved on 19th October 2015 for details on requirements for the thesis including publications. Section 4.3 applies to all candidates commencing on or after 1st January 2019.

8.4 Presentation of a thesis comprising creative work and exegesis

In several disciplines submission of a body of creative work and an exegesis or exegetical work is typical. The extent and proportions of these two components within the thesis should be negotiated, at an early point in candidature, between the candidate and the supervision team, having regard to the academic requirements of the discipline and the degree being sought. The thesis proportions, (% creative work and % exegesis) must be specified at confirmation and the exegesis component cannot be less than 25% of the work. In particular, the thesis plan that is presented as part of the confirmation of candidature milestone should include consideration of:

- the form and nature of the practice-based work,
- overall volume and percentage weighting of work in the creative and exegetical components, and
- how the creative work or practice-based component can be examined (for example, whether examiners may need to attend a live performance or exhibition).

If a performance or exhibition is held prior to submission of the thesis, the candidate must present an abstract of the thesis prior to the performance or exhibition. Confidentiality of the examination will be maintained. This may require scheduling private sessions or performances for examiners and may require that examiners attend the performance or exhibition at different times. If the performance or exhibition involves audience participation or

interaction with the candidate, the candidate must not influence the examiners' assessment of the creative work. The exegesis and creative work must be examined as an integrated whole. A durable record of the performance or exhibition (electronic format) must be submitted with the thesis or within six weeks of submission of the thesis.

8.5 Eligibility to submit for examination

To be eligible to submit a thesis or exegesis for examination a candidate must:

- be currently enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research course,
- have been enrolled for at least the minimum period required (one year full-time or part-time equivalent),
- have completed the requirements of candidature as outlined in the [HDR Candidate Procedure](#), and
- have approval from the Dean, Graduate Research School or nominee to submit the thesis.

8.6 Submission of thesis for examination

Candidates must complete and submit the Intention to Submit form at least four weeks prior to their intended submission date.

All theses submitted for examination must be accompanied by a completed Release of Thesis form and include a statement of originality incorporating an acknowledgement of others' contributions, editorial assistance, copyright provisions, required summaries and other relevant approvals. A thesis will not be released for examination without these materials in place. For further guidance, candidates are directed to the [HDR Candidature Guidelines](#)

Normally, a candidate will submit a thesis for examination with the endorsement of the supervisory panel, as demonstrated by the signatures on the Release of Thesis form. In certain rare circumstances, a candidate may submit a thesis for examination without the endorsement of the supervisory panel. Such a thesis will not be accepted without the permission of the Dean, Graduate Research School and unless the candidate has signed an acknowledgement outlining:

- an awareness of the reason/s for the supervisor's lack of endorsement of the thesis
- an awareness of the range of examination outcomes that are possible, and
- personal responsibility for the thesis result, including responsibility for any tuition fees applicable during a period of thesis revisions.

Resubmission of a thesis with post-examination revisions must occur within the timeframe designated by Examination Committee.

Where the candidate requires further time to undertake post-examination revisions, a special case for consideration may be addressed to the Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee).

The Graduate Research School is responsible for sending theses to the nominated examiners.

8.7 Eligibility of Examiners

An individual may be appointed as an examiner where they have:

- an appropriate disciplinary and academic background of relevance to the thesis content,
- be recognised as an international expert in the field or discipline of the thesis,
- no major conflicts of interest with the supervisory panel, candidate or University as per section 8.8, and
- evidence of recent research activity, as demonstrated by peer-reviewed publications output, receipt of research funding and/or research training activity.

An individual would be expected to hold a Research Doctorate Degree (or equivalent to a Level 10 award under the [AQF](#)) to be appointed to an Examination Panel for either masters or doctoral candidates.

In exceptional circumstances, an examiner without a Research Doctorate may be acceptable, where it can be shown that they possess equivalent relevant experience. The Dean, Graduate Research School must approve exceptions.

Examiners must be external to the University. Current Emeritus Professors, adjuncts and honorary staff of Federation University are ineligible. Previous staff of the University may be eligible if at least five years has elapsed since their employment, and the staff member has not interacted with the candidate, supervisory team and/or work being examined. Current or previous supervisors of the candidate are not to be appointed as examiners.

Consideration will be made of the balance of expertise on the panel, and the independence of examiners. Generally, more than one examiner for a given thesis will not be appointed from the same institution, particularly if from the same disciplinary unit (e.g., faculty or research centre).

Examiners will be recorded on a register of examiners. Where an examiner has acted more than once and have been nominated again, the Dean, Graduate Research School determine the appropriateness of their appointment.

8.8 Avoiding conflicts of interest

When nominating examiners, supervisors must consider conflicts of interest and avoid them where possible.

Supervisors and examiners must declare any real or perceived conflict of interest (either professional, personal, or commercial) that exists between the individual, the candidate and/or the supervisory panel. The Dean, Graduate Research School will determine whether such a conflict results in ineligibility to serve on the Examination Panel.

All parties should consult the Australian Council of Graduate Research's Guidelines for [Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research](#), which provides assistance in identifying major and minor types of conflict.

Where the Dean, Graduate Research School becomes aware of a conflict of interest during the examination and/or prior to the release of the examination outcome to the candidate, the examiner may be stood down and/or their report may be considered ineligible.

8.9 Nomination and number of Examiners

Theses submitted for all HDR courses require the nomination of a minimum of three external examiners. Generally, the thesis will be examined by two of the nominated examiners, with additional examiner(s) considered as 'reserve' examiner(s).

The principal supervisor, in consultation with the supervisory panel, is responsible for nominating examiners.

The Recommendation of Examiners form should be submitted to the Graduate Research School for approval by the Dean, Graduate Research School. The Dean, Graduate Research School may consult with the relevant academic staff member in considering such approvals.

Where examiners are unavailable or unresponsive to a request to examine, that examiner will be stood down and a reserve will be substituted to help ensure a timely examination process.

The University reserves the right to appoint the reservist as a third examiner for the purposes of:

- ensuring the examination panel has an appropriate depth and breadth of disciplinary expertise for the topic under examination, and/or
- providing additional information to assist in moderating the examination results (e.g., where the first two examiner's reports are divergent).

Where the latter case is applied, a third examiner would be introduced prior to the initial examination outcome being released to the candidate.

If a thesis is being re-examined and new examiners are required, the process for nomination and appointment is as per sections 8.7 and 8.9.

The nomination and appointment of examiners should be done in confidence. Supervisors may request that the candidate provide a list of examiners who are unsuitable (e.g., due to co-authorship); however, other than this, the candidate should not have any role in identifying or nominating prospective examiners. Participation of the candidate in the nomination process may result in one or more examiners being stood down.

8.10 Categories of examination outcomes

Candidates may receive one of five possible examination outcomes, which are labelled and defined as per below:

- The thesis should be classified as PASSED without further examination; or
- The thesis should be classified as PASSED, subject to minor corrections made to the satisfaction of the University, that is, the thesis is suitable for conferral once the author has addressed nominated passages, textual errors, and referencing mistakes. These actions should largely be able to be undertaken independently by the candidate; or
- The thesis should be PASSED subject to major corrections made to the satisfaction of the University, that is, the thesis requires new data collection, new or revised data analysis, substantial rewriting of one or more chapters, or contains many stylistic/presentation errors. These actions should be undertaken with ongoing input from the supervisory team, or
- The thesis should be classified as DEFERRED; the thesis requires substantial revision and re-examination by external experts and the Candidate should be permitted to submit the thesis for examination in a revised form; or
- The thesis should be classified as FAILED.

A candidate who receives either:

- PASSED, subject to major corrections, or
- DEFERRED

may be required to re-enrol for a minimum period of one semester. The candidate is responsible for meeting any applicable tuition costs associated with a period of re-enrolment to effect major revisions.

8.11 Examination committee

The HDR Coordinator convenes the Examination Committee and acts as, or nominates, the Chair. The Examination Committee (EC) should comprise of at least three people. Members should:

- be University staff members who hold registration as a principal supervisor,
- have tenure for at least as long as the expected duration of the examination,
- hold a Research Doctorate (or other qualification equivalent to [AQF Level 10](#)), and
- have sufficient experience and expertise to ensure rigour and quality within the examinations process.

8.12 The examination recommendation

The Dean, Graduate Research School receives the Examiner Reports and provides a recommendation to the Chair, EC in the form of a Dean, Graduate Research School Report. The Dean, Graduate Research School may request additional information from any examiner, supervisor or discipline expert.

- The Dean, Graduate Research School may recommend an examination outcome (see 8.10 Categories of examination outcomes) or, where examiner reports differ, the appointment of a third examiner.
- The recommendation must be based only on materials formally submitted by the candidate for the examination.
- The Dean, Graduate Research School reserves the right to redact the examiner's comments prior to release of Examiners Reports to the candidate and/or the supervisory panel. Where this occurs, recipients will be notified that the report has been provided in an abridged version.
- The Chair, EC, is responsible for reviewing the Examiner Reports and the Dean, Graduate Research School Report.

8.13 Undertaking revisions

Where corrections or revisions are required, the candidate is responsible for preparing a revised thesis, together with a Corrections Template, to respond to the examiners' comments. This should be submitted through the Graduate Research School to the EC. In responding to revisions, the candidate should clearly indicate any amendments made, and a rationale for adopting, rejecting, or implementing a modified version of, the recommendations provided in the examiners' report. No new information or research should be included in the thesis when undertaking corrections where the thesis will not be resubmitted for examination.

Candidates should note that having published sections of the thesis in a peer-reviewed format is not, on its own, an adequate defence for not addressing suggested changes to unpublished sections.

Corrected theses are submitted to the EC which must complete the Results Recommendation Form and confirm that the thesis is ready for a Recommendation of Award.

8.14 Requirements for thesis re-examination

Where an examination outcome of deferred is confirmed by the EC, the following will apply:

- where the original thesis examiner/s have indicated a willingness to re-examine, they will normally be invited to re-examine the thesis,
- where one or more of the original thesis examiners are unwilling or unavailable, nominations for new examiners will be sought from the principal supervisor, as per section 8.9 The replacement examiners will be notified that the thesis is being submitted for re-examination,
- the re-examiners will receive the University's advice to the candidate for the revision of the thesis, including the original examiners' reports and an integrated list of revisions as agreed to by the candidate and the supervisor and approved by the EC; and a comprehensive statement from the candidate outlining the substantive changes that have been made to the thesis, and a concise defence against any recommendations for changes that have not been accepted,
- the re-examiners will be asked to assess this material against the relevant [AQE](#) descriptors relevant to the degree being sought, without consideration of any prior materials submitted by the candidate.

Where a candidate has revised their thesis following a result of deferred, a new Release of Thesis form must be submitted with the revised thesis.

A research thesis which is undergoing external re-examination is eligible for only one of three examination outcomes:

- *Passed*: except for minor textual errors and/or minor corrections to referencing, the thesis is suitable for immediate conferral
- *Passed subject to corrections*: the thesis is suitable for conferral once the author has addressed nominated passages, textual errors, referencing corrections. Such corrections will be made to the satisfaction of the University; or

- *Failed*: the thesis is not suitable for conferral.

Where, following consideration of the reports of the examiners, it is determined that a thesis does not meet the standard expected for a PhD, but the Graduate Research School Board is satisfied that the research is of suitable merit, the Graduate Research School Board may recommend a Master of Philosophy be awarded. The award of the masters degree is subject to the acceptance of that degree by the candidate.

Following re-examination, the Dean, Graduate Research School shall receive the examination reports, and provide a moderated recommendation to the EC. In arriving at their decision, the Dean may request additional information from any examiner, either in written format or via an interview.

Following re-examination, the Dean, Graduate Research School may recommend only one of the re-examination outcomes listed in section 8.14, and follow the requirements as set out in section 8.14.

8.15 Oral defence

An oral defence is not a mandatory component of examination at Federation University. The oral defence shall serve the purpose of confirming or moderating the examination outcome recommended by the external examiners. An oral presentation may take place at the request of the Examination Committee, candidate and/or the Dean, Graduate Research School, the candidate may be required to:

- conduct an oral presentation explaining the thesis findings, context, and contribution to the research discipline, and/or
- participate in an interview to confirm that all revisions have been completed to the satisfaction of the Examination Committee and Dean, Graduate Research School.

Such an interview may take place in person, or by tele- or videoconference.

8.16 Thesis summaries

The Candidate must submit two thesis summaries:

- 300 word abstract of their thesis in plain language
- 30 word summary for the Graduation Booklet.

Summaries must be submitted to the EC for approval.

8.17 Recommendation of awards

Once revisions have been completed (where required) the Chair, Examination Committee, on behalf of the EC, will complete the Results Recommendation Form, approve the summaries, and submit them to the Graduate Research School.

The Graduate Research School obtains final approval for Recommendation of Award from the Dean, Graduate Research School and the Chair, Academic Board.

8.18 Examinations undertaken in-confidence

If a thesis contains culturally or commercially sensitive material, or potentially patentable research results, the University shall ensure that examiners sign an appropriate confidentiality agreement prior to examining the thesis. The University shall take whatever other action is necessary to protect patentable or culturally or commercially sensitive material contained in theses in a way which will not introduce undue delay in the awarding of the degree.

8.19 Payment of honoraria

Examiners shall be eligible to receive an honorarium payment consistent with the rates applied for the examination of research theses, as published by [Universities Australia](#) from time to time. The honoraria will be paid only after receipt of an examination report (and would be offered to any examiner who has supplied a report, even if that report is later set aside).

9. Graduation

Graduations are administered by the University Graduation Office. Candidates are eligible to graduate after the University Council approves the award of the degree. Candidates wanting to attend a graduation ceremony will need to abide by timelines and requirements as set out on the Federation University Graduations webpage.

10. Appeals

A candidate, supervisor or examiner who has reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction with any formal decision made under this procedure may lodge an appeal by written request to the Dean, Graduate Research School, within 28 days of date of issue of the decision. If the candidate or supervisor can demonstrate that due process was not followed or that new evidence is available, they may lodge an additional internal appeal with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

With regard to matters relating to academic assessment, a candidate who has reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction with any formal decision may appeal. Appeals processes can be found in the Academic Appeals Policy and Academic Appeals Procedure.

11. Grievances

HDR candidates should refer to the [Complaints Management Procedure](#) for guidance on submitting complaints or grievances.

Supporting documents

- [Research and Research Training Policy](#)

Responsibility

- The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (as the Approval Authority) is responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of this procedure.
- The Dean, Graduate Research School (as the Document Owner) is responsible for maintaining the content of this procedure as delegated by the Approval Authority.

Promulgation

The [HDR Candidate Procedure](#) will be communicated throughout the University via:

1. Distribution of e-mails to Head of Institute/School / Head of Department / University staff relevant.
2. Documentation distribution, eg. posters, brochures.
3. Notification to Institutes/Schools/Federation TAFE.

Implementation

The [HDR Candidate Procedure](#) will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. A FedNews announcement and on the 'Recently Approved Documents' page on the University's Policy Central website.
2. Staff induction sessions.
3. Training sessions.