

HDR Supervision Guideline

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Purpose

This guideline describes the responsibilities of Higher Degree by Research candidate supervisors and the requirements for registration on the Register of Research Higher Degree Supervisors.

Scope

This guideline applies to all higher degree by research candidature applicants, enrolled candidates, and persons with supervisory or administrative responsibilities for HDR candidates, candidature applications, and candidate induction processes.

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](#)
- [The National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011](#)
- [Standards for Registered Training Organisations \(RTOs\) 2025](#)

Definitions

Note: definitions throughout this guideline can be accessed via the Policy Glossary. A further list of definitions specifically relevant to this guideline is included below:

Term	Definition
Candidate	Student enrolled in a higher degree by research program.
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.
Dean, GRS	Dean, Graduate Research School – academic staff member responsible for overseeing HDR programs, HDR candidates and supervisors.
EFTSL	Estimated full time study load.
Employee	Any staff member employed by Federation University 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 program and course of study with Federation University by submitting a form of enrolment signed by both the applicant and the program coordinator or person of equivalent authority.
GRS	Graduate Research School
GRSB	Graduate Research School Board
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
HDR Program	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 Federation University
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 program.

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 Federation University 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 an HDR candidate's research.
Associate supervisor	A staff member of Federation University who meets the requirements of and has been approved for inclusion to the Register of Supervisors as a supervisor and provides support to an HDR candidate and to the Principal Supervisor.
External supervisor	An individual who is external to Federation University 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 Federation University 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 the ways in which the candidate and supervisory team will work together. Includes sections on understanding safety requirements, access to funding, regular meeting and working arrangements, expectations about the research project and its administration.
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency

Guidelines statement

1. Minimum research threshold for supervision registration

For inclusion on the Register of Supervisors, required prospective supervisors must meet the minimum threshold, which include:

- At least two peer reviewed research outputs (within 5 years), and
- Completion of the minimum required training for registration or reregistration, as outlined in the [HDR Supervision Procedure](#).

In addition to continuing to meet the above requirements, registration renewal also requires the supervisor to have at least:

- One active PhD candidate, or
- One PhD completion within the last two years, as at the date of registration renewal.

Peer reviewed research outputs are defined as:

- HERDC eligible journal articles, books, book chapters, conference papers (full papers only),
- Non-traditional research outputs,
- Successful grant applications, or
- Equivalent (on a case-by-case basis).

2. Supervisor Registration

Applicants for all supervisor categories, excluding External Supervisors, must meet the minimum research threshold for registration. Applicants will be designated to the highest supervision category to which they meet the requirements, as outlined in Section 1 of the [HDR Supervision Procedure](#). Registration is for a period of four years.

Supervisors may be registered in one of the following categories:

- Mentor Supervisor (eligible to supervise PhD and Masters candidates as the lead supervisor, and eligible to mentor Provisional Principal Supervisors),
- Principal Supervisor (eligible to supervise PhD and Masters candidates as the lead supervisor),
- Provisional Principal Supervisor (eligible to supervise one PhD or Masters candidate, overseen by a mentor),
- Associate Supervisor (eligible to supervisor only as part of a team lead by a Principal Supervisor),
- External supervisor.

In some instances, depending on experience and qualifications, applicants may be approved to be Principal or Associate Supervisor to Masters level students only. Where a current Federation University HDR candidate meets requirements for registration as a supervisor, they may not register as a supervisor at any level until they have graduated from their HDR program.

Inclusion on the Register of HDR Supervisors does not guarantee appointment to supervisory panels.

Where a Provisional Principal Supervisor status is designated, normally only one candidate will be allocated to that staff member as Principal Supervisor.

	Steps	Who is responsible	Comment
1.	Staff member undertakes required training for initial registration, and/or provides evidence of previously completed supervision training	Staff member	All staff members requesting to register as a supervisor at Federation University must undertake specific training sessions, as outlined in the Skills for Supervisors program.
2.	Staff member completes Application for Admission to Register of Higher Degree by Research Supervisors	Staff member	

3.	The application is forwarded to the GRS	Staff member	
4.	Dean, Graduate Research School or nominee assesses application for appropriate supervision category (i.e. Principal Supervisor, Associate etc.)	Dean, Graduate Research School (or nominee)	The Dean, Graduate Research School will assess the supervisor application and assign an appropriate supervision category based on the information provided in the application.
5.	GRS advises applicant of application outcome	GRS	GRS will contact the supervisor advising them of their registration status. The supervisor's line manager will be CC'd into the email confirmation.
6.	The Register is updated with supervisors' details and the University systems are updated	GRS	The GRS will ensure the Register is updated, the supervisor status is accurately recorded in the University system and reported through the appropriate University committees.

3. Renewal, review, and removal of supervision status

University staff including honorary and adjunct staff members who are registered to supervise will continue to be registered for a four-year period unless one of the following conditions applies:

- staff cease employment (paid or honorary appointment) with the University,
- staff no longer meet the requirement of minimum research achievement,
- staff have their registration revoked.

3.1 Supervisor status changes

Principal and Associate Supervisors who cease paid employment with the University and successfully gain an adjunct appointment must seek approval from the Dean, Graduate Research School to continue with their supervision duties. In most cases, principal supervision will be reassigned to a paid Federation staff member. For the purposes of this document, Emeritus Professors are treated as paid staff.

Supervisors who cease their employment or honorary appointment may apply to continue to be a member of existing supervisory panels as an External Supervisor.

3.2 Renewal of supervision status

The Graduate Research School will periodically assess supervisor registration status at least every four years.

	Steps	Who is responsible	Comment
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1.	GRS identifies supervisors whose registration is due to expire	GRS	The GRS will identify supervisors whose registration is due to expire as recorded in the Supervisor Register.
2.	GRS will assess existing information to confirm supervisors meets minimum research threshold for supervision registration to continue registration	GRS	<p>GRS will assess available information stored in University systems to confirm that the supervisor meets the minimum research threshold for supervision registration, including undertaking the required training.</p> <p>Where information stored in University systems do not indicate that the supervisor has continued to meet requirements, the supervisor will be given an opportunity to provide additional information to support reregistration.</p>
3.	GRS will forward details of reregistering supervisors to Dean or nominee for assessment	GRS, Dean, Graduate Research School	<p>Dean, Graduate Research School will assess reregistration information.</p> <p>Where a supervisor no longer meets the minimum research threshold for supervision registration, the supervisor will be suspended, and their supervision status will be reviewed.</p> <p>Where a supervisor has continued to meet the minimum research threshold for supervision registration, their status will be approved. If they have met the requirements for registration at a higher level, they will automatically be reregistered at the higher level.</p>
4.	GRS advises supervisor of reregistration / suspension.	GRS	GRS will email the supervisor to confirm outcome, and where appropriate, new supervision status.
5.	GRS will update the Register of Supervisors with new review date and/or new supervision status.	GRS	The GRS will ensure the Register is updated, the supervisor status is accurately recorded in the University system and reported through the appropriate University committees.

3.3 Supervision status review, revocation or continuation

Where a supervisor no longer meets the requirements outlined in Section 2 Supervisor Registration or Section 4. Responsibilities and conduct of the [HDR Supervision Procedure](#), their supervision status may be reviewed.

Where supervisory performance may be judged as misconduct by a staff member, the matter will be handled in accordance with the University Enterprise Bargaining Agreement rather than under this policy. Supervision status may be suspended or revoked as a result of a staff misconduct case.

Where the conduct of a supervisor may also contravene the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research they may be reported to the University Research Integrity Officer and handled in accordance with the [Research and Research Training Policy](#). Supervision status may be suspended or revoked as a result of a research misconduct case

Where a supervisor no longer meets the threshold for registration as a supervisor, their registration status will be suspended. While suspended, they will no longer be able to accept new students, and their current supervision load will be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

General responsibilities of supervisors can be found in the HDR Supervisor Toolkit.

	Steps	Who is responsible	Comment
1.	Supervisor is identified as no longer meeting the requirements for registration as a supervisor.	Dean, line-manager, GRS	Supervisors may be identified through Renewal steps, student report, or line-manager report for review. Request for review can be made to the Dean, Graduate Research School. Where the request relates to activity that may reasonably be considered misconduct or research misconduct, it will be resolved under the appropriate University process.
2.	Dean, GRS reviews supervisor and (where required) candidate information.	Dean, Graduate Research School	Dean may request information from candidates, line-managers, GRS, or another other related party. The Dean, Graduate Research may request to meet with the supervisor to discuss the review.
3.	Dean, Graduate Research School makes recommendation to resolve the unsatisfactory performance.	Dean, Graduate Research School	The Dean may make one of the following recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action required. • Continued supervision with mediation between the supervisor and candidate(s).

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued supervision with the addition of a performance development plan, including mentoring, and a GRS-approved supervisory plan for current candidates. A change in the category of supervision with the addition of a performance development plan, including mentoring, and a GRS-approved supervisory plan for current candidates. A temporary freeze on supervision of new candidates with the addition of a performance development plan. Temporary suspension of supervision of current candidates with the addition of a performance development plan, and a GRS-approved supervisory plan for current candidates. Discontinuation of registration.
4.	The Dean, Graduate Research School advises the Supervisor and supervisor line manager of outcome	Dean, Graduate Research School	Where the recommendation includes development of a supervision performance plan, the Dean may elect to refer the matter to the appropriate HDRC.
5.	Supervisor contests/accepts the outcome	Supervisor	<p>The Supervisor may contest the Dean's recommendation to the Chair, Research Committee in writing.</p> <p>Where the outcome is accepted by the supervisor, the HDRC will work with the supervisor, supervisory panel and line manager to enact the recommendation.</p> <p>Where the recommendation is to discontinue registration, the GRS will update the supervisor status on the Register and in the University system.</p>

3.4 Contesting supervision review outcome

	Steps	Who is responsible	Comment
1.	Supervisor writes to Chair, Research Committee requesting to contest the outcome of a Review.	Supervisor	The supervisor must write to the Chair within ten business days of receiving their outcome. The supervisor must outline why they are contesting the recommendation.
2.	Chair, Research Committee reviews recommendation, case and any requested information.	Chair, Research Committee	<p>The Chair may request further information from any of the involved parties.</p> <p>Where discontinuation of registration is determined by the Chair a panel to review the case must be formed.</p> <p>A panel may also be formed at the Chair's request for any other determination.</p> <p>The panel must be comprised of members of Research Committee, should achieve gender balance and be of three or more people.</p>
3.	The panel convenes and discusses the case	Chair, Research Committee	<p>The panel may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the supervisor • Meet with the Dean, Graduate Research School • Review the available information or request new information. <p>In resolving the matter, the panel may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uphold, overturn or revise the recommendation from the Dean, Graduate Research School.

4. Appointment to a supervisory panel and workload approval

Initial appointment to a supervisory panel is made during the candidate's application process and is outlined in the [HDR Candidate Procedure](#).

The appointment of a supervisor to a supervisory panel must be approved by the Dean, Graduate Research School. In addition to requirements outlined in the [HDR Candidate Procedure](#), supervisors may only be approved for appointment to the supervisory panel where:

- They are registered on the Register of Supervisors

- They have available workload, and
- The workload is approved by their line-manager.

Each panel will be designated with a single Principal Supervisor and up to four Associate Supervisors. The principal supervisor will be responsible for leading the supervisory panel and must be apportioned the greatest percentage of workload.

4.1 Apportionment of supervisory panels

Unless otherwise advised, the Graduate Research School will apportion the time allocated for a supervisory panel using the following formula:

- Where there are two paid Federation University staff members:
 - 60% for the Principal Supervisor
 - 40% for the Associate Supervisor
- Where there are more than two paid Federation University staff members:
 - 50% for the Principal Supervisor
 - 50%/x, where x is the number of paid Associate Supervisors

The Principal Supervisor will normally carry the highest load. No individual supervisor should will have more than 80% of the load and or less than a minimum load of 10% of the supervision responsibility. Where the Principal Supervisor is apportioned less than 50% of the allocated time, they must demonstrate that they will be responsible for the activity and outcomes of the supervisory panels and how the supervisory responsibilities will be delegated between panel members. Any delegation of responsibility should be recorded and provided to the Graduate Research School. Principal Supervisors may not delegate the administrative responsibilities associated with candidature to other panel members. External supervisors will not be formally assigned supervision load.

The supervisory panel may update the apportionment of the supervisory panel at any time by contacting the Graduate Research School. If a change of apportionment would generate additional workload for a staff member, workload approval must be sought from the supervisor's line manager.

5. Change of Supervisor

The student or supervisor may request a change in supervisory arrangements at any time during the period of candidature. Where a change of supervisor is required due to any reason it is expected that the candidate can provide feedback on the proposed new supervision arrangements.

Where adequate supervision cannot be arranged to support the continued candidature, or the candidate does not agree to reasonable proposed supervision arrangements, candidature may be required to be terminated.

5.1 Candidate-initiated supervisor change

Requests for changes to a candidate's supervisory panel should be made using the appropriate form. Where it is identified that a new supervisor or replacement supervisor is required on a supervisory panel, the following steps are followed:

	Steps	Who is responsible	Comment
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1.	Candidate discusses change of supervisor with current supervisor or HDRC	Candidate	Where the candidate is unable to discuss the change of supervision with their current supervisor, the candidate should discuss their request to change supervisors with their HDRC.
2.	Candidate completes appropriate form and submits to GRS	Candidate	The candidate will submit the form to the GRS. Approval of the change will be routed through the appropriate steps. Where a change of Principal Supervisor (PS) is requested, the original PS will not form part of the approval chain.
3.	Supervisor and HDRC review request	Supervisor, HDRC, GRS	<p>A request to include a new supervisor or change an associate or external supervisor on a panel will be routed through the PS to the HDRC. Where a change request includes a new PS, the approval will be routed through the new PS to the HDRC.</p> <p>Where the request is not endorsed, the HDRC will meet with the candidate.</p> <p>Where a panel member is being removed, they should be advised by the new or existing Principal Supervisor prior to the Change of Supervisor request submission. Supervisors may discuss this aspect with the HDRC for advice and/or support for handover arrangements.</p>
4.	Dean, Graduate Research School or nominee assesses new panel membership	Dean, Graduate Research School or nominee	Where the request is not approved, the HDRC will meet with the candidate.
5.	GRS records the change of supervisor in University systems and records the change for GRSB'	GRS	The GRS will ensure the change of supervisory relationships are accurately recorded in the University system and reported through the appropriate University committees.

5.2 Resignation of a supervisor from a supervisory panel

Supervisors resigning from supervision panel/s may initiate a change of supervisor as per Section 7 of the [HDR Supervision Procedure](#).

Supervisors must work with the candidate and supervisory panel to resolve any issues prior to submitting a change of supervisor request. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, where a PS is requesting to leave a panel, they are expected to stay in place and perform supervision duties until a new and appropriate supervision arrangement is in place.

Where a supervisor is exiting the University, it is expected that they will consult with their line-manager and HDRC regarding alternative supervision arrangements for their candidates.

	Steps	Who is responsible	Comment
1.	Supervisor discusses change of supervisory panel with HDRC and, where appropriate, their line-manager	Supervisor	Where a associate supervisor is leaving the University, not re-applying for supervision status, or requesting to leave the supervisory panel, the current principal supervisor is responsible for discussing this with the remaining supervision panel/s, their candidate/s and providing suitable supervision suggestions to the candidate/s and HDRC.
2.	Supervisor discusses change in panel with candidate	Supervisor	Supervisors should discuss any change in panel membership with the candidate prior to completing and submitting the appropriate form
3.	Supervisor and HDRC identify new panel members to replace exiting members	Supervisor, HDRC	The HDRC and current supervisory panel (including exiting supervisor) will identify new panel members. Where appropriate they will liaise with the exiting supervisor's line manager.
4.	HDRC discusses new supervisory panel with candidate	HDRC, candidate	<p>The HDRC discusses the proposed supervisory arrangements with the candidate. The candidate may provide feedback regarding the panel composition.</p> <p>Where there is limited supervisory experience available, there may be limited options for new supervisory arrangements.</p>
5.	HDRC advises GRS of proposed supervisory arrangements	HDRC	The HDRC will also advise the HDR Team of any other new conditions of candidature, such as changes to milestone dates.

6.	Supervisory arrangements approved / denied by Dean, Graduate Research School	Dean, Graduate Research School	Where arrangements are not approved, the HDRC will recommence process at step 3.
7.	The GRS issues a new Letter of Candidature, including new supervisory arrangements and any other amendments to conditions of candidature.	GRS	
8.	Candidate accepts new Letter of Candidature	Candidate	Where the candidate does not accept the new Letter of Candidature, their candidature may not be able to continue, or the project may have to be substantially altered. Where no other supervision is available in their area, their candidature may be terminated.
9.	GRS records the change in supervisory arrangements in Research Management System	GRS	The GRS will ensure the change of supervisory relationships are accurately recorded in the University system and reported through the appropriate University committees.

6. Offshore supervision

Supervisory panels formed to support offshore candidates should refer to the Guide to Offshore HDR Supervision for guidance on supervisory practice.

Supporting documents

- [Research and Research Training Policy](#)
- [HDR Admission and Induction Guidelines RS2099](#)
- [HDR Candidate Procedure RS2091](#)
- [HDR Candidature Guidelines RS2097](#)
- [HDR in Partnership Procedure RS1934](#)
- [HDR Scholarship Guidelines RS2098](#)
- [HDR Supervision Procedure RS2090](#)
- HDR Supervision Toolkit

Responsibility

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

Promulgation and implementation

This guideline will be communicated throughout the University community via:

1. A FedNews announcement and on the 'Recently Approved Documents' page on the University's Policy Central website.
2. Information Sessions; and/or
3. Training Sessions.