

Higher Degree Research Policy

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) The [Higher Degree Research Policy](#) relates to all courses at the University which meet the relevant Australian Government standards for classification as research higher degrees or professional doctorates under the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#), as outlined by Appendix D: ACU's Higher Degree Research Graduate Attributes and Learning Outcomes.

(2) These Regulations should be read in conjunction with the University's [Academic Regulations](#), which will apply in relation to the administration of coursework units within research higher degrees and in the event of the [Higher Degree Research Policy](#) being silent on any matter. Unless advised to the contrary, the [Higher Degree Research Policy](#) will have priority over the [Academic Regulations](#) for students enrolled in research higher degrees or professional doctorates. Other requirements specific to individual courses should be read in conjunction with these Regulations.

Section 2 - Definitions

(3) The [Glossary of Student and Course Terms](#) provides guidance on the meaning of terms used in the University. In these Regulations, the following terms will have the meanings set out below.

Term	Definition
Associate Supervisor	Is a specialist from outside ACU who can provide particular expertise to the supervision of a candidate.
Associate Supervisor (End-user)	Is a specialist from an end-user (organisation) external to ACU who can provide expertise to the supervision of an HDR student and who will directly use or directly benefit from the research. An Associate Supervisor (End-user) supplements the supervision provided by the ACU Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor.
Candidate	Means a student undertaking a research higher degree or professional doctorate.
Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018	Means that Code as promulgated by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) , and as adopted and amended from time-to-time by the Academic Board and Senate of the University.
Co-supervisor	Is an ACU academic staff member who has been appointed by the Associate Dean, Research to work with the Principal Supervisor in the provision of guidance and assistance to a candidate in the undertaking of the relevant degree requirements.
Doctorate or Doctoral	Refers to the Doctor of Philosophy and / or Doctor of Education and / or Doctor of Ministry, according to the context.
End-user (organisation)	Is a business, community, community organisation, government or government organisation, or non-government organisation.
External Examiner	Means an examiner who, during the period of candidature, has not been a member of the academic staff of the University, has not recently taught an examinable unit or course at the University, has not acted as a Supervisor of the candidate, does not have a personal relationship with the candidate or their Supervisors, and has not published with the Supervisors within the last five years.
Intellectual Property Policy	Means that Policy as adopted and amended from time-to-time by the University.

Term	Definition
Graduate Research School	Located within Student Administration, are responsible for administering the candidate life-cycle requirements of research higher degree and professional doctorate students.
ODVCRE	Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Principal Supervisor	Is an ACU academic staff member who has been appointed by the Associate Dean, Research to lead a team of two or more Supervisors in the provision of guidance and assistance to a candidate in the undertaking of the relevant degree requirements.
Research Higher Degree	Is a degree which meets the specifications of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). It includes Doctoral degrees and Masters degrees (research). It excludes Masters degrees (coursework) and Bachelor Honours degrees.
Research Institute	Means one of ACU's formally recognised research groupings established after 2013.
Supervisor	Used generically, includes the Principal Supervisor, Co-Supervisor, Associate Supervisor and / or Associate Supervisor (End-user), as appropriate, according to the context.
Thesis	Means any written dissertation in fulfilment of two thirds or more of the degree requirements, and includes, in the case of music (composition), a composition portfolio consisting of tapes and / or scores together with a written dissertation.
URC	is the University Research Committee, a standing committee of the Academic Board, which administers research higher degrees.

Section 3 - Application of Regulations

(4) The [Higher Degree Research Policy](#) apply to the designated degrees of Doctor and Master listed in the Schedule of Research Higher Degrees. Other requirements specific to individual courses should be read in conjunction with these Regulations. It is the responsibility of candidates to ensure the accuracy of their enrolment in accordance with the course requirements and these Regulations.

Section 4 - Research Higher Degrees

(5) The University Research Committee (URC) is responsible for the administration of research higher degrees, subject to the general supervision of the Academic Board. The Chair of the URC may act executively out-of-session on behalf of the Committee, subject to any action being reported to the URC at its next meeting. The URC will report regularly to the Academic Board and make recommendations on the award of research higher degrees directly to the Board.

(6) The relevant Faculty Research Committee or equivalent, under the general supervision of the Faculty Board, will administer the coursework component of Doctorates and Masters degrees (research), identified in the Schedule of Research Higher Degrees.

(7) Designated Officers in the ODVCRE and the Graduate Research School (Student Administration) are authorised to action matters approved by the URC, in accordance with approved delegations.

Section 5 - Eligibility for Admission to a Research Higher Degree

(8) Eligibility for admission to a research higher degree is determined having regard to the applicant's capacity to meet the entry requirements approved by the Academic Board for that course. Eligibility criteria for each research degree are outlined below:

(9) Doctor of Philosophy or the Doctor of Ministry

- a. an Australian undergraduate degree with Honours ([Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (AQF level 8) at a minimum level of Second Class Division A (Distinction average) or international equivalent; or
- b. a Masters degree by research (Distinction average) successfully completed in a relevant discipline or related field; or
- c. a Masters degree by coursework (Distinction average) with appropriate research training including a substantial component of original research, successfully completed in a relevant discipline or related field; or
- d. a qualification equivalent to AQF level 8 or 9 completed to at least distinction average with appropriate research training including a substantial component of original research in a relevant discipline or related field; or
- e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants with professional experience or cultural expertise in Indigenous Knowledges or kinship connections and who demonstrate capacity to undertake an independent research project on Indigenous Knowledges; or
- f. other professional experience demonstrating research training equivalent to AQF level 8 or 9 and capacity to undertake an independent research project.

(10) Doctor of Education

- a. a Master degree in Education (or equivalent), with a credit average or higher; and
- b. at least five years' relevant work experience.

(11) Master of Philosophy

- a. an Australian undergraduate degree with Honours (AQF level 8) at a minimum level of Second Class Division A (Distinction average) or international equivalent; or
- b. a Masters degree by research (Distinction average) successfully completed in a relevant discipline or related field; or
- c. a Masters degree by coursework (Distinction average) with appropriate research training including a substantial component of original research, successfully completed in a relevant discipline or related field; or
- d. a qualification equivalent to AQF level 8 or 9 completed to at least distinction average with appropriate research training including a substantial component of original research in a relevant discipline or related field; or
- e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants with professional experience or cultural expertise in Indigenous Knowledges or kinship connections and who demonstrate capacity to undertake an independent research project on Indigenous Knowledges; or
- f. other professional experience demonstrating research training equivalent to AQF level 8 or 9 and capacity to undertake an independent research project.

(12) Master of Education (Research)

- a. a four-year Bachelor of Education degree (or equivalent) with a credit average or higher;
- b. Meeting the eligibility requirements for admission is not in itself a guarantee of admission. The applicant's potential to undertake research, the quality and feasibility of the research proposal, the availability of appropriate supervision and the referees' reports will all be taken into consideration. Please refer to clause (17).
- c. Applicant's requesting admission under eligibility criteria clauses (9)e. or (11)e. of these Regulations will be reviewed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Committee before proceeding for assessment.

(13) English Language Proficiency

- a. An applicant seeking admission on the basis of a qualification undertaken in a language other than English must demonstrate current English language proficiency as set out in Appendix C. Any such English language qualification must have been completed no earlier than two years prior to commencement of the course of study to which the applicant seeks admission.

Section 6 - Admission to a Research Higher Degree

Application for Admission to a Research Higher Degree

(14) A person seeking admission to a research higher degree will make application to the University, in accordance with the prescribed process.

(15) Applications for admission to most research higher degrees will be accepted twice a year, although some Faculties have specific closing dates for some degrees. Applicants should check the website, or consult the appropriate Faculty, to confirm the closing date for their degree program.

(16) An applicant who has previously been enrolled as a Doctoral or Masters degree (research) candidate at ACU or another institution and who has failed the examination for that degree will not be admitted as a candidate for the same research higher degree at ACU, or be allowed to resubmit materials for examination.

Criteria Used in Assessing an Application for Admission

(17) The matters to be taken into account in assessing an application for admission to a research higher degree are:

- a. the academic record and any other qualifications and professional experience of the applicant relevant to the proposed course of study and research;
- b. Academic referees' reports, demonstrating the capacity of the candidate to undertake research in the proposed area of study;
- c. the scope, quality and feasibility of the research proposal;
- d. the availability of suitable Supervisors;
- e. the relevance of the proposed research project to the strategic direction of the School / Research Institute / Faculty / University;
- f. performance at a selection interview, or in a written task, where appropriate; and
- g. other relevant material, as requested by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research or Director, Graduate Research School. All such material will be accompanied by a statement from the applicant specifying the extent to which the applicant has been responsible for its preparation.

Proposed Program of Advanced Study and Research

(18) Before making a recommendation to the Director, Graduate Research School about whether the applicant should be admitted, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research must be satisfied, after consultation with the National Head of School / Research Institute Director, and such other persons as may be appropriate, that:

- a. the program of research is appropriate for the degree;
- b. the program of research aligns with the School / Research Institute / Faculty research strategy;
- c. the applicant meets the relevant eligibility requirements for admission as defined in Section 4; and
- d. accredited Supervisors, University support, and facilities necessary for the pursuit of the proposed research are available.

(19) The Director, Graduate Research School is responsible for approving applications for admission to research higher

degrees.

Candidates Transferring from Other Institutions

(20) An applicant who meets the eligibility criteria for admission, and who has maintained an acceptable standard of work at Doctoral or Masters degree (research) level at another institution, may apply for admission to a research higher degree at ACU.

(21) The University will set in place the minimum length of candidature to be completed at ACU prior to the submission of the thesis. Normally, this period will be set as a minimum of one year of full-time study (or part-time equivalent).

Deferment of Admission

(22) An offer of admission in a research higher degree may not normally be deferred beyond 12 months from the date on which the offer was made;

(23) A candidate wishing to defer their offer beyond 12 months must request approval from the Director, Graduate Research School. The Director, Graduate Research School will consider the resources, including Supervisors, likely to be available to support the candidate at the deferred enrolment date when considering the request.

Cancellation of Enrolment in the Event of Fraudulent Basis of Admission

(24) The University will cancel the enrolment of a candidate found to have been admitted on the basis of fraudulent, falsified or misleading information, including a plagiarised or partially plagiarised research proposal. Fees paid will be forfeited.

Section 7 - Academic Credit

(25) The provisions of the [Academic Regulations](#) apply in relation to any application for credit towards a coursework component of a research higher degree.

(26) Credit of prior enrolment for candidates transferring into a research higher degree from another institution will not normally exceed two years full-time (or part-time equivalent) in the case of a doctorate, or one year full-time (or part-time equivalent) in the case of a Masters degree (research).

Section 8 - Enrolment and Re-enrolment

Requirements for Enrolment

(27) An applicant who has been offered a place in a research higher degree must complete the required enrolment procedures by the due date. Enrolment is not complete until all relevant University and government fees and charges have been paid, or approved payment arrangements have been made.

Withdrawal from Enrolment

(28) A candidate is responsible for seeking the advice from their Principal Supervisor and Faculty Associate Dean, Research prior to submitting a request to withdraw from enrolment.

(29) A candidate may withdraw from enrolment at any time prior to the submission of the thesis for examination.

(30) A candidate who has submitted their thesis for examination cannot withdraw from enrolment.

(31) A candidate must inform the Graduate Research School of their withdrawal via the prescribed process.

Reinstatement of Enrolment after Withdrawal from ACU

(32) A candidate wishing to have their enrolment reinstated following withdrawal from ACU must make written application to the Faculty Associate Dean, Research within two years of the date of the withdrawal.

(33) The Faculty Associate Dean, Research may recommend reinstatement of enrolment to the Director, Graduate Research School after taking into account:

- a. the reasons for withdrawal and the standing of the candidate at the time of withdrawal;
- b. the time consumed thus far in candidature; and
- c. whether the research and the thesis can retain academic currency and be satisfactorily completed within the time remaining to the candidate.

(34) If the Director, Graduate Research School approves the reinstatement of enrolment, the commencement of candidature will be the date of the original enrolment, and the total period remaining in the candidature will be the duration of the degree minus the period of original enrolment.

Concurrent Enrolment

(35) A full-time candidate enrolled in a research higher degree may not normally enrol or remain enrolled in any other academic program at ACU or any other institution.

(36) Exceptions to clause (35) of these Regulations include:

- a. where an ACU staff member enrolled in a doctoral program is required to undertake the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GCHE) as part of their probation criteria. Under such circumstances, the staff member may be granted a six-month suspension of candidature to study the GCHE. This period is in addition to the twelve month suspension of candidature allowed within the candidature; and
- b. where a candidate is also enrolled in the Master of Psychology (Clinical) or the Master of Psychology (Educational and Developmental).

Section 9 - Status and Commencement Date of Candidature

Commencement Date of Candidature

(37) The date of commencement of candidature will be determined by the University and will normally be at the two prescribed intake dates per year.

Enrolment Status

(38) A domestic applicant may be enrolled as either a full-time candidate or a part-time candidate.

(39) An international applicant may only be enrolled as a full-time candidate.

(40) An international applicant will be enrolled as an onshore candidate.

Duration of Candidature

(41) A candidate enrolled in a research higher degree will complete the degree requirements within the period

indicated in the Schedule of Research Higher Degrees.

(42) Duration of candidature will not be less than one year full-time (or part- time equivalent).

(43) A period of extension of candidature may be permitted under certain circumstances (refer Section 13 of these Regulations).

Section 10 - Supervision

(44) These Regulations should be read in conjunction with the [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#).

(45) The Faculty Associate Dean, Research, in consultation with the National Head of School / Research Institute Director, is responsible for recommending to the Director, Graduate Research School a candidate's Supervisors, both ACU accredited and external.

(46) As a minimum, two ACU accredited Supervisors, a Principal and a Co- supervisor, will be appointed to a candidate. Associate Supervisor(s) and / or an Associate Supervisor(s) (End-user) may also be appointed, as appropriate.

(47) The University is required to provide an assurance of continuity of expert supervision for the duration of candidature in the field of study.

(48) All Supervisors will follow the procedures outlined in the [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#).

(49) If a Principal Supervisor is to be absent from the University for more than one month, the Principal Supervisor needs to notify the Faculty Associate Dean, Research immediately. The Faculty Associate Dean, Research, in consultation with the relevant National Head of School / Research Institute Director, will ensure that appropriate supervisory arrangements are in place to support the candidate and will notify the Graduate Research School(Student Administration) within five working days.

(50) A candidate may request a review of their supervision arrangements and the appointment of a new Supervisor/s. Such a request will be considered by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, who where appropriate, will take into account the views of the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor, available supervisory capacity in the Faculty, and the academic progress of the candidate before making a decision.

(51) The Director, Graduate Research School is responsible for appointing a candidate's ACU supervisors, i.e. the Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor(s).

(52) The Director, Graduate Research School is responsible for appointing a candidate's external supervisors, ie an Associate Supervisor and / or an Associate Supervisor (End-user).

Section 11 - Pursuance of Candidature

(53) In accordance with the timeframes specified in these Regulations, each year candidates must complete either a milestone (Confirmation of Candidature, Mid-Candidature Review or Final Review) or an HDR Student Academic Progress Report (APR).

(54) Any variations to candidature approved under Section 13 of these Regulations may impact milestone and / or APR timeframes. A candidate's individual timeframe will be adjusted in accordance with the nature and duration of the candidate's approved variation.

Confirmation of Candidature

(55) The Confirmation of Candidature process comprises the submission of a chapter, a progress report and a verbal presentation that will be assessed by a Confirmation of Candidature Panel.

(56) All HDR candidates must complete the ACU online orientation prior to undertaking their confirmation. In addition, any mandated coursework should have been successfully completed prior to confirmation. Confirmation of Candidature will normally occur for a:

- a. Doctor of Education candidate, within 12 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (24 months for a part-time candidate);
- b. Doctor of Philosophy candidate, within six months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (12 months for a part-time candidate);
- c. Doctor of Ministry candidate, within 10 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (20 months for a part-time candidate);
- d. Master of Philosophy candidate, within six months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (12 months for a part-time candidate); and
- e. Master of Education (Research) candidate, within 12 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (24 months for a part-time candidate);

(57) The Confirmation of Candidature Panel will comprise, as a minimum:

- a. the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, or nominee who is a senior researcher with an established high-quality track record in the discipline, as Chair;
- b. the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor(s); and
- c. two researchers with an established high-quality track record in the discipline or cognate area.

(58) Where the candidate is also an ACU staff member the Faculty Associate Dean, Research may vary the panel composition so as to minimise potential conflicts of interest and ensure greater objectivity of the confirmation process.

(59) In all cases, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research is responsible for approving the Confirmation of Candidature Panel in accordance with these Regulations.

(60) The Confirmation of Candidature panel will assess the quality of the work undertaken since commencement of candidature, the feasibility of the project to be completed in a timely manner and the rate of progress made since commencement of candidature.

(61) Following consideration of the report prepared by the Confirmation of Candidature Panel, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research will make one of the following recommendations to the Director, Graduate Research School:

- a. the candidature of the candidate is to be confirmed in the degree in which the candidate is enrolled; or
- b. the candidate is to be required to re-present their written submission and / or presentation within three months (six months for part-time candidates); or
- c. the candidature of the candidate is to be confirmed in a lesser degree (for doctoral candidates only); or
- d. the candidature of the candidate is to be terminated.

(62) Following consideration of the recommendation made by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, the Director, Graduate Research School will either:

- a. confirm the candidature of the candidate in the degree in which the candidate is enrolled; or
- b. require the candidate to re-present their written submission and / or presentation within three months (six

- months for part-time candidates); or
- c. confirm the candidature of the candidate in a lesser degree (for doctoral candidates only); or
- d. terminate the candidature of the candidate.

(63) A doctoral candidate who re-presents their written submission and presentation within three months (or within six months for a part-time candidate) and is still not confirmed will have their candidature downgraded or their enrolment terminated.

(64) A masters (research) candidate who re-presents their written submission and presentation within three months (or within six months for a part-time candidate) and is still not confirmed will have their enrolment terminated.

(65) A candidate who has their enrolment terminated for failing Confirmation of Candidature may, under certain circumstances, request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these Regulations).

(66) A candidate who has transferred to ACU from another institution and can provide evidence that their candidature was confirmed at their former institution to the satisfaction of the Director, Graduate Research School, will be exempted from the confirmation of candidature process at ACU.

Mid-Candidature Review

(67) The Mid-Candidature Review process comprises the submission of two chapters, separate to the chapter submitted at Confirmation of Candidature (or papers if planning to undertake a PhD with publication), a progress report and a verbal presentation that will be assessed by a Mid-Candidature Review Panel.

(68) Mid-Candidature Review will normally occur:

- a. for a Doctor of Education candidate, within 22 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (44 months for a part-time candidate);
- b. for a Doctor of Philosophy candidate, within 18 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (36 months for a part-time candidate);
- c. for a Doctor of Ministry candidate, within 20 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (40 months for a part-time candidate);
- d. for a Master of Philosophy candidate, within 12 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (24 months for a part-time candidate); and
- e. for a Master of Education (Research) candidate, within 18 months of enrolment as a full-time candidate (36 months for a part-time candidate).

(69) The Mid-Candidature Review Panel will comprise, as a minimum:

- a. the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, or nominee who is a senior researcher with an established high-quality track record in the discipline, as Chair;
- b. the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor(s); and
- c. two researchers with an established high-quality track record in the discipline or cognate area.

(70) Where the candidate is also an ACU staff member the Faculty Associate Dean, Research may vary the panel composition so as to minimise potential conflicts of interest and ensure greater objectivity of the confirmation process.

(71) In all cases, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research is responsible for approving the Mid-Candidature Review Panel in accordance with these Regulations.

(72) The Mid-Candidature Review Panel will assess the quality of the work undertaken since confirmation of

candidature, the feasibility of the project to be completed in a timely manner and the rate of progress made since confirmation of candidature.

(73) Following consideration of the report prepared by the Mid-Candidature Review Panel, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research will make one of the following recommendations to the Director, Graduate Research School:

- a. the candidature of the candidate is to be continued in the degree in which the candidate is enrolled; or
- b. the candidate is to be required to re-present their written submission and / or presentation within three months (six months for part-time candidates); or
- c. the candidature of the candidate is to be continued in a lesser degree (for doctoral candidates only); or
- d. the candidature of the candidate is to be terminated.

(74) Following consideration of the recommendation made by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, the Director, Graduate Research School will either:

- a. confirm the candidature to continue in the degree in which the candidate is enrolled; or
- b. require the candidate to re-present their written submission and / or presentation within three months (six months for part-time candidates); or
- c. confirm the candidature to continue in a lesser degree (for doctoral candidates only); or
- d. terminate the candidature of the candidate.

(75) A doctoral candidate who re-presents their written submission and presentation within three months (or within six months for a part-time candidate) and who does not successfully complete their mid-candidature review will have their candidature downgraded or their enrolment terminated.

(76) A masters (research) candidate who re-presents their written submission and presentation within three months (or within six months for a part-time candidate) and who does not successfully complete their mid-candidature review will have their enrolment terminated.

(77) A candidate who has their enrolment terminated for not successfully completing their mid-candidature review may, under certain circumstances, request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these Regulations).

Final Year Review

(78) The Final Year Review process comprises the submission of two chapters, or papers (if submitting a PhD with Publication) that have not been previously reviewed at the Confirmation of Candidature Panel or at the Mid-Candidature Review, a progress report and a verbal presentation that will be assessed by the Final Year Review Panel.

(79) The Final Year Review seminar will normally occur for a:

- a. Doctor of Education candidate, at least 4 months prior to the thesis submission date as a full-time candidate (8 months prior for a part-time candidate);
- b. Doctor of Philosophy candidate, at least 6 months prior to the thesis submission date as a full-time candidate (12 months prior for a part-time candidate);
- c. Doctor of Ministry candidate, at least 4 months prior to the thesis submission date as a full-time candidate (8 months prior for a part-time candidate);
- d. Master of Philosophy candidate, at least 6 months prior to the thesis submission date as a full-time candidate (12 months prior for a part-time candidate);
- e. Master of Education (Research) candidate, at least 3 months prior to the thesis submission date as a full-time candidate (6 months prior for a part-time candidate).

(80) The Final Year Review Panel will comprise, as a minimum:

- a. the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, or nominee who is a senior researcher with an established high-quality track record in the discipline, as Chair;
- b. the Principal and Co-Supervisor(s), and, where relevant, the Associate Supervisor / Associate Supervisor (End-user); and
- c. two researchers with an established high-quality track record in the discipline or cognate area.

(81) Where the candidate is also an ACU staff member the Faculty Associate Dean, Research may vary the panel composition so as to minimise potential conflicts of interest and ensure greater objectivity of the process.

(82) In all cases, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research is responsible for approving the composition of a Final Year Review Panel in accordance with the Regulations.

(83) The Final Year Review Panel will assess the quality of the work undertaken since Mid-Candidature Review, the feasibility of the project to be completed in the timely manner and the rate of progress made since the Mid-Candidature Review.

(84) Following consideration of the report prepared by the Final Year Review Panel, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research will make one of the following recommendations to the Director, Graduate Research School:

- a. the candidate may proceed to submit the thesis for examination for the degree in which they are currently enrolled; or
- b. the candidate must re-present their written submission and / or presentation within three months (six months for part-time candidates); or
- c. the candidate may proceed to submit the thesis for examination for a lesser degree (doctoral candidates only); or
- d. terminate the candidature.

(85) Following consideration of the recommendation made by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, the Director, Graduate Research School will either:

- a. approve the candidate to proceed to submission of the thesis for examination for the degree in which the candidate is enrolled; or
- b. require the candidate to re-present their written submission and / or presentation within three months (six months for part-time candidates); or
- c. approve the candidate to proceed to submission of the thesis for examination for a lesser degree (doctoral candidates only); or
- d. terminate the candidature of the candidate.

(86) A doctoral candidate who re-presents their written submission and presentation within three months (or six months for a part-time candidate) and who does not successfully complete their Final Year Review will either have their enrolment downgraded to a lesser degree or terminated.

(87) A masters (research) candidate who re-presents their written submission and presentation within three months (or six months for a part-time candidate) and who does not successfully complete their Final Year Review will have their enrolment terminated.

(88) A candidate who has their enrolment terminated for not successfully completing their Final Year Review may, under certain circumstances, request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these Regulations).

HDR Student Academic Progress Report

(89) Candidates who have not completed a milestone as detailed in clauses (53) to (66) of these Regulations during the preceding 12 months, must complete an HDR Student Academic Progress Report as per the prescribed process.

(90) Candidates returning from leave or a suspension of candidature may be required to complete an HDR Student Academic Progress Report upon their return.

Section 12 - Upgrade and Downgrade of Research Degrees

Upgrade to a Doctoral Degree

(91) A Master of Philosophy candidate who has been confirmed in their current degree and can demonstrate that the scope of their research has changed and would now be considered that of a Doctoral level, may apply to the Associate Dean, Research to upgrade to the Doctor of Philosophy.

(92) A Master of Education (Research) candidate who has been confirmed in their current degree and can demonstrate that the scope of their research has changed and would now be considered that of a Doctoral level, may apply to the Associate Dean, Research to upgrade to the Doctor of Education.

(93) A candidate cannot apply for an upgrade after 12 months (or 24 months for part-time candidates) of enrolment.

(94) In making application for an upgrade, a candidate must clearly demonstrate how the extended research meets the expectations of doctoral level research (refer definitions in Section 2 of these Regulations). The application will involve a written submission as well as a presentation to an Upgrade Panel.

(95) An application for upgrade will be assessed on:

- a. academic merit, with consideration given to the quality of the candidate's proposal and whether it meets the expectations of doctoral level research;
- b. the candidate's performance in the degree thus far;
- c. the candidate's academic history; and
- d. the report of the Upgrade Panel.

(96) The Upgrade Panel will comprise, as a minimum:

- a. the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, or nominee as approved by the Director, Graduate Research School, as Chair;
- b. the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor(s); and
- c. two researchers with an established high-quality track record in the discipline or cognate area.

(97) Where the candidate is also an ACU staff member, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research may vary the panel composition to minimise potential conflicts of interest and ensure greater objectivity of the upgrade process.

(98) In all cases, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research is responsible for approving the Upgrade Panel in accordance with the Regulations.

(99) The Chair of the Upgrade Panel will make one of the following recommendations to the Director, Graduate Research School, the:

- a. candidate should be permitted to upgrade to the nominated doctoral program; or
- b. candidate should not be permitted to upgrade to the nominated doctoral program.

(100) Following consideration of the recommendation made by the Chair of the Upgrade Panel, and the candidate's written application, the Director, Graduate Research School will make one of the following decisions to:

- a. approve the candidate's application for an upgrade to the nominated doctoral program; or
- b. refuse the candidate's application for an upgrade to the nominated doctoral program, in which case the candidate will remain enrolled in the Masters degree (research).

(101) If a request for an upgrade is approved, the commencement date of candidature will be backdated by a period of time equal to that part of the applicant's candidature for the Masters degree (research).

(102) A candidate who has their application for an upgrade refused may request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these Regulations).

Downgrade to a Masters Degree (Research)

(103) A Doctor of Philosophy candidate who has been confirmed in their candidature, may apply to the Faculty Associate Dean, Research to downgrade to the Master of Philosophy.

(104) A Doctor of Education candidate who has been confirmed in their candidature, may apply to the Faculty Associate Dean, Research to downgrade to the Master of Education (Research).

(105) Doctor of Ministry candidates are not usually eligible to downgrade to a lesser degree.

(106) A candidate may apply to downgrade at any time prior to the submission of the doctoral thesis for examination.

(107) A candidate who has submitted their doctoral thesis for examination cannot apply to downgrade.

(108) A candidate is responsible for seeking the advice of their Principal Supervisor and Faculty Associate Dean, Research prior to applying to downgrade.

(109) In applying to downgrade, a candidate must demonstrate that their research meets the expectations of masters level research and provide a rationale for the downgrade.

(110) The Faculty Associate Dean, Research will consider the candidate's application to downgrade and will recommend that the Director, Graduate Research School either:

- a. Approve the candidate's application to downgrade to the nominated masters program; or
- b. Decline the candidate's application to downgrade to the nominated masters program.

(111) Following consideration of the Faculty Associate Dean, Research's recommendation, the Director, Graduate Research School will either:

- a. Approve the candidate's application to downgrade to the nominated masters program; or
- b. Decline the candidate's application to downgrade to the nominated masters program, in which case the candidate will remain enrolled in the Doctoral degree.

(112) If a request for a downgrade is approved, the commencement date of candidature will be backdated by a period of time equal to that part of the applicant's candidature for the Doctoral degree.

(113) A candidate who is approved to downgrade, may be required to pay fees for their remaining enrolment in the

nominated Masters by research program.

(114) A candidate who has their application for a downgrade refused may request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these Regulations).

Section 13 - Variations to Candidature

(115) A candidate may request to vary the conditions of their candidature including:

- a. change of study mode (full- / part-time);
- b. fieldwork;
- c. change to supervision arrangements;
- d. change to thesis title;
- e. suspension of candidature (interruption of studies);
- f. extension of candidature or thesis submission date; and
- g. extension of stipend scholarship.

Application to Vary Conditions of Candidature

(116) An application must be made by the prescribed process and set out in full the reasons for the request, as well as provide documentary evidence as required by the University.

(117) Retrospective applications to vary candidature normally will not be approved.

Suspension of Candidature

(118) A suspension of candidature is a leave of absence during which time a candidate's enrolment is inactive (suspended).

(119) Requests for a suspension of candidature must not exceed:

- a. a maximum of 12 months of full-time enrolment or 24 months for part-time enrolment) for a doctoral candidate; and
- b. a maximum of six months of full-time enrolment (or 12 months for part-time enrolment) for a Masters degree (research) candidate.

(120) Requests for a suspension of candidature will not be approved until a candidate has been confirmed in their candidature. Exceptions will be considered for medical conditions and parental leave where the request to suspend is accompanied by:

- a. a medical certificate from a registered health practitioner; or
- b. a Statutory Declaration to be provided by the candidate to verify they are the primary carer. The Statutory Declaration must clearly outline the circumstances upon which the candidate will be the primary carer including how, and in what way, they will be caring for the child.

(121) A candidate on an approved suspension of their candidature is not entitled to supervision or the use of any University facilities or resources for the duration of the suspension.

(122) A candidate's enrolment including expected milestone completion and thesis submission dates will be adjusted according to the dates of the approved suspension.

(123) Requests for suspension for candidates who are receiving a stipend scholarship will be subject to the conditions of that stipend scholarship.

(124) The Director, Graduate Research School is responsible for assessing all requests for a suspension for candidates who are receiving a stipend scholarship.

(125) The Faculty Associate Dean, Research is responsible for approving requests for a suspension of candidature within the timeframes specified in clause (119) of these Regulations for candidates who are not receiving a stipend scholarship.

(126) When assessing applications for suspension, the University will consider the availability of appropriate supervision, the candidate's progress to date and the feasibility of a timely completion upon return from suspension.

(127) A candidate who has exceeded the suspension provisions in clause (119) of these Regulations, may, in exceptional circumstances, apply to the Director, Graduate Research School for a further suspension of candidature, as follows:

- a. a maximum of six months of full-time enrolment (or 12 months part-time enrolment) for a doctoral candidate; and
- b. a maximum of three months of full-time enrolment (or six months of part-time enrolment) for a Masters degree (research) candidate.

Other Leave from Candidature

(128) Other candidate leave entitlements are outlined in Appendix B.

Resumption of Candidature Following a Period of Approved Leave or a Suspension of Candidature

(129) A candidate who fails to resume their candidature, in accordance with University procedures, following a period of approved leave, outside study or a suspension of candidature will have their enrolment cancelled (refer Section 18 of these Regulations).

(130) A candidate who has their enrolment cancelled for failure to resume their candidature following a period of approved leave, outside study or a suspension of candidature may request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these regulations).

Extension of Candidature

(131) Requests for an extension of candidature will not exceed 12 months of full-time study (or 24 months of part-time study) for a doctoral candidate.

(132) Requests for an extension of candidature at the time of Mid-Candidature Review or at the time of the Final Year Review will normally only be considered if the candidate's academic progress has been satisfactory.

(133) The Director, Graduate Research School is responsible for approving requests for an extension of candidature both within and beyond the timeframes specified in clause (131) of these Regulations.

(134) When assessing applications for extension, the Director, Graduate Research School will consider the availability of appropriate supervision, the candidate's progress to date and the feasibility of a timely completion.

(135) Candidates who are approved for an extension and whose Research Training Program Fees Offset Scholarship has expired, may be required to pay tuition fees for the duration of the approved extension. Refer [Research Training Program Scholarship Policy](#).

(136) Candidates who are approved for an extension and whose ACU Tuition Fee Waiver has ended, may be required to pay tuition fees for the duration of the approved extension. Refer [ACU Tuition Fee Schedule](#).

(137) Candidates who reach the end of an approved extension and who have not submitted their thesis for examination, will not normally be considered for further extensions.

(138) Candidates who are not approved for an extension may have their enrolment cancelled.

Section 14 - Fieldwork

(139) A candidate will normally pursue their studies wholly under the control of the University, or as a part of a Cotutelle or other Institutional agreement.

(140) A candidate will normally carry out their work at the University except as provided in Section 14 of these Regulations, or as specifically approved by the Director, Graduate Research School.

(141) A candidate may be permitted, with the approval of the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, to collect research material in the field. Such proposals for fieldwork should be noted in confirmation of candidature documentation and, where relevant, the ethics approval application.

(142) Where appropriate, the Principal Supervisor, in consultation with the Faculty Associate Dean, Research, should ensure that an Associate Supervisor is appointed to assist the candidate in the field. The extent of this assistance should be agreed to and documented. A candidate who has been granted permission to undertake fieldwork overseas must have completed their confirmation of candidature.

(143) The Principal Supervisor and candidate must agree in advance as to the extent of contact to be maintained whilst the candidate is absent from the University.

(144) For a doctoral degree, a candidate will not normally spend more than a total of one year of full-time study (or part-time equivalent) carrying out fieldwork away from the University. For a Masters degree (research), the period will normally be a maximum of six months of full-time study (or part-time equivalent). Periods of approved fieldwork count towards candidature.

(145) All fieldwork must be approved by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research before it commences and before any travel arrangements are made.

(146) Any fieldwork proposed to be undertaken outside Australia requires additional approval from the Director, Graduate Research School and will be subject to travel advisories at the time as issued by the Australian Government.

(147) A candidate who has been granted permission to undertake fieldwork will remain subject to relevant ACU regulations, rules, policies and procedures, as well as any fees which may be applicable at the time.

Section 15 - Obtaining Ethics Clearance for Research

(148) All research carried out by candidates enrolled in a research higher degree at ACU must comply with relevant State and Commonwealth legislative requirements and guidelines in relation to the conduct of research and its ethical considerations.

(149) Candidates and their Supervisors are required to inform themselves of these requirements and all relevant policies and guidelines on research-related matters.

(150) Research projects involving the following must receive appropriate clearance from the relevant ethics or safety

committee(s).

- a. contact with human participants, interviews, the administration of questionnaires or access to public or private records;
- b. animals;
- c. recombinant DNA; or
- d. ionising radiation

(151) Failure to obtain written ethics clearance in advance of the data collection, including recruitment of research participants, is considered to be a breach of the [Research Code of Conduct](#) and may also breach State or Commonwealth legislation.

(152) Normally, research candidates will apply for ethics approval for their research after being confirmed in their candidature.

Section 16 - Ownership Of Intellectual Property

(153) Candidates are required to familiarise themselves with the [Intellectual Property Policy](#) and to abide by any requirements specified therein.

Section 17 - Standards of Scholarly Integrity

(154) Candidates and Supervisors are required to follow standards on scholarly integrity and to comply with the [Research Code of Conduct](#).

(155) A condition of enrolment as a research higher degree candidate at ACU is that any written work submitted for evaluation by their Supervisors, or a Panel, such as a Confirmation of Candidature, Mid-Candidature Review or Final Year Review Panel, or for examination, may be subjected to testing using text matching software.

(156) Research proposals submitted with applications for admission and / or scholarship may be subjected to testing using text matching software.

Section 18 - Procedural Responsibilities of Candidates

(157) A candidate has the following procedural responsibilities:

- a. to obtain approval from the Faculty Associate Dean, Research or Director, Graduate Research School, in accordance with ACU procedures, before taking leave from their studies or suspending their candidature;
- b. to obtain approval from the Faculty Associate Dean, Research or Director, Graduate Research School, in accordance with ACU procedures, before conducting any fieldwork or study outside of the University;
- c. to resume their candidature, in accordance with ACU procedures, the working day after his or her suspension or leave expires;
- d. to return to ACU, in accordance with prescribed procedures, following a period of approved fieldwork or outside study; and
- e. to comply with any other procedural responsibilities stated in the [Higher Degree Research Policy](#), as well as national and University Codes of Conduct, and other relevant University policies.
- f. To submit a HDR Student Academic Progress Report:

- i. on the prescribed form
- ii. by the due date; and
- iii. Rto the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor and Faculty Associate Dean, Research unless the candidate is on approved leave from their studies, including a suspension of candidature, when notified of the due date, in which case submission of the report can be delayed until 10 working days after the date on which the approved leave or suspension of candidature ends.

(158) A candidate who fails to meet their procedural responsibilities will be instructed in writing by the Director, Graduate Research School to do so within 10 working days of the date of the instruction.

(159) A candidate who fails to comply with the instruction issued by the Director, Graduate Research School will have their enrolment terminated.

(160) A candidate will be notified in writing if their enrolment is terminated and of their right to request a review of the decision (refer Section 22 of these Regulations). In the case of an international candidate whose enrolment has been terminated, the candidate will also be notified of the possible implications of the action on their visa status.

(161) Advice of the termination of enrolment will be provided to the candidate's Supervisors and Faculty Associate Dean, Research, and any other staff members who may need to take action as a result of the decision. A copy of the decision will be held by the Graduate Research School on the student record and reported to the URC.

Section 19 - Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

(162) Unsatisfactory academic progress is defined as failure by a candidate to do one or more of the following:

- a. maintain regular and frequent contact with their Supervisors, including attendance at scheduled meetings;
- b. make application for ethics approval, where required, in a timely manner;
- c. participate in work-in-progress activities;
- d. undertake research training activities, as requested by their Supervisors;
- e. adhere to agreed timelines for progress and completion; and
- f. achieve any other agreed goals.

(163) A Faculty Associate Dean, Research who is of the view that a candidate is not making satisfactory academic progress following:

- a. review of the HDR Student Academic Progress Report; or
- b. at other times, upon advice and the receipt of supporting documentation provided by the Principal Supervisor will notify the candidate in writing that their academic progress is under review.

(164) The candidate will be asked to develop a completion plan, in consultation with their Principal Supervisor, which must include a timeline and clearly articulated monthly goals. The completion plan must be endorsed by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research within 20 working days of the candidate being notified that such a plan is required; a copy of the plan must be retained by the Faculty Associate Dean, Research and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Research School.

(165) Should the candidate fail to meet one or more of the monthly goals articulated in the completion plan, the Faculty Associate Dean, Research may recommend to the Director, Graduate Research School that the candidate's enrolment be terminated. The recommendation must include supporting documentation.

(166) The Director, Graduate Research School will notify the candidate in writing that the Faculty Associate Dean,

Research has recommended that their enrolment be terminated, and that the recommendation will be considered by the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee. The candidate will be provided with a copy of the recommendation for termination of their enrolment.

(167) The Director, Graduate Research School will invite the candidate to respond to the recommendation and make submissions as to why their enrolment should not be terminated. The Director, Graduate Research School may request further information or advice from the candidate, the candidate's Supervisors and / or Faculty Associate Dean, Research, or any other relevant person.

(168) If a candidate's response and / or submissions include allegations of misconduct of a member of staff which may be in contravention of the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#), the Director, Graduate Research School will seek the advice of the Chief People Officer, as to whether the matter should be considered under the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#). If a process under the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#) is commenced, the Director, Graduate Research School may suspend the academic progress process pending the outcome of the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#) process.

(169) The Director, Graduate Research School will convene a meeting of the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee to consider the recommendation, including the supporting documentation, as well as the candidate's response and submissions, and any further information and / or advice received. The Committee will comprise:

- a. the Director, Graduate Research School (Chair);
- b. an Associate Dean, Research from a Faculty other than the one in which the candidate is enrolled; and
- c. a senior researcher (nominated by the Director, Graduate Research School).

(170) A person who was involved in making the recommendation to terminate the candidate's enrolment will not be appointed to the Committee.

(171) The meeting may be held by telephone or video conference.

(172) The Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee may decide that:

- a. the candidate's academic progress is satisfactory and that their enrolment continue;
- b. the candidate's enrolment continue on a probationary basis subject to certain conditions being met (failure to meet the conditions will result in termination of enrolment);
- c. that the candidate's progress is unsatisfactory and in the case of doctoral candidates only, the candidate should be downgraded to enrolment in a Masters Degree (Research); or
- d. the candidate's enrolment be terminated for unsatisfactory academic progress.

(173) Normally within 10 working days of a decision by the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee, the Director, Graduate Research School will notify the candidate in writing of the decision, the reasons for the decision, and, if the decision is to terminate enrolment, the circumstances under which the candidate may submit an appeal against the decision (refer Section 23). In the case of an international candidate whose enrolment has been terminated, the candidate will also be notified of the possible implications of the decision on their visa status.

(174) A copy of the decision will be provided to the candidate's Supervisors and Faculty Associate Dean, Research, and any other staff members who may need to take action as a result of the decision. A copy of the decision will be held by the Graduate Research School on the student record and, if the decision is to terminate enrolment, reported to the URC.

Section 20 - Submission of a Thesis for Examination

(175) On completing the course of advanced study and research, a candidate will submit a written thesis based on work carried out during candidature that meets the characteristics of either Doctoral or Masters degree (research) research as defined in Section 1 of these Regulations.

(176) A thesis will comply with the [Guideline on the Preparation and Presentation of a Higher Degree Research Thesis for Examination](#).

Section 21 - Examinations

Assessment of Taught Units

(177) Unless otherwise determined, the examination of material to satisfy the requirements of Taught Units at master or doctoral degree level will comply with the [Academic Regulations](#).

Examination of the Thesis

(178) On completing the program, a candidate will submit a thesis based on work carried out during candidature which complies with Section 20 of these Regulations.

(179) A doctoral thesis will be examined by two examiners, both of whom will be external to ACU and at least one of whom will be from an overseas institution. The examiners will be appointed according to the [Appointment of Examiners and Examination Policy](#).

(180) A Masters degree (research) thesis will be examined by two examiners, both of whom will be external to ACU. The examiners will be appointed according to the [Appointment of Examiners and Examination Policy](#).

Section 22 - Review Of a Decision on a Candidature-related Matter

(181) A candidate may request a review of a decision made in relation to the following matters:

- a. the outcome of a request for an extension of candidature and / or scholarship;
- b. the outcome of a request for a suspension of candidature and / or scholarship;
- c. a decision to cancel enrolment if a request for an extension of candidature is not approved;
- d. a decision not to approve an upgrade from a Masters degree (Research) to a doctoral program;
- e. a decision not to approve a downgrade from a doctoral program to a Masters degree (Research);
- f. a decision to cancel enrolment for failure to obtain approval to take leave from their studies or to suspend their candidature;
- g. a decision to cancel enrolment for failure to obtain approval to conduct fieldwork;
- h. a decision to cancel enrolment for failure to resume candidature after an approved period of leave or a suspension of candidature;
- i. a decision to cancel enrolment for failure to return to ACU after an approved period of fieldwork;
- j. a decision to cancel enrolment for failure to complete a HDR Student Academic Progress Report;
- k. a decision to cancel enrolment for failure to comply with any other procedural responsibilities stated in the [Higher Degree Research Policy](#); and
- l. a thesis examination result awarded by the University

(182) In the case of (181)l., a request to review a thesis examination result may be made only on procedural grounds; that is, where a candidate's reasons for review are that the University has failed to follow the procedures set out in the relevant published University regulation, rule or policy. To the extent that a request for a review concerns the assessment of the merit of the thesis, it will not be considered.

(183) The right of review against the result of a coursework unit in a research higher degree will be in accordance with the [Academic Regulations](#).

(184) A candidate who requests a review of a decision made in relation to a matter listed in clause (181) of these Regulations, must do so in writing to the Director, Graduate Research School within 20 working days of notification of any decision in respect of which the request for a review is submitted. The reasons for the request must be set out in full and all supporting documentation must be included.

(185) The Director, Graduate Research School will acknowledge the request for a review in writing and refer it to the Chair of the Research Candidate Review Committee normally within five working days of receiving it.

(186) If a candidate's request for a review includes allegations of misconduct of a member of staff which may be in contravention of the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#), the Chair will seek the advice of the Chief People Officer, as to whether the matter should be considered under the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#). If a process under the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#) is commenced, the Chair may suspend the review process pending the outcome of the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#) process.

(187) The Chair may request further information and / or advice from the candidate, the candidate's Supervisors and/or Faculty Associate Dean, Research, or any other relevant person.

(188) The Chair will convene a meeting of the Research Candidate Review Committee to consider the request for a review, including the supporting documentation, as well as any further information and / or advice received. The Committee will comprise:

- a. the Chair (nominated by the Director, Graduate Research School); and
- b. two senior researchers (nominated by the Director, Graduate Research School).

(189) The composition of the Committee will vary depending on the Faculty in which the candidate requesting a review is enrolled.

(190) A person who has been a decision-maker in the matter under review will not be appointed to the Committee.

(191) The meeting may be held by telephone or video conference. All members of the Committee must attend for the meeting to be quorate.

(192) The Research Candidate Review Committee may decide to:

- a. confirm or vary the decision that was originally made in relation to the matter under review; or
- b. overturn the decision that was originally made in relation to the matter under review.

(193) Normally within 10 working days of a decision of the Research Candidate Review Committee, the Chair will notify the Director, Graduate Research School and the candidate in writing of the decision, the reasons for the decision, and the circumstances under which the candidate may submit an appeal against the decision (refer Section 23 of these Regulations). In the case of an international candidate whose enrolment has been cancelled, the candidate will also be notified of the possible implications of the decision on their visa status.

(194) A copy of the decision will be provided to the candidate's Supervisors and Faculty Associate Dean, Research, and any other staff members who may need to take action as a result of the decision. A copy of the decision will be

held by the Graduate Research School on the student record and, if the decision is to cancel enrolment, reported to the URC.

Section 23 - Appeals

Grounds for an Appeal

(195) A candidate may appeal against a decision:

- a. made by the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee pursuant to clause (173) of these Regulations;
or
- b. made by the Research Candidate Review Committee pursuant to clause (193) of these Regulations.

(196) An appeal may be made only on the grounds that published policies and / or procedures have not been followed.

(197) Failure by the candidate to make available to any earlier reviews all relevant supporting documentation reasonably available at the time is not adequate grounds for appeal.

(198) Matters relating to the development or substance of any published University regulation, rule or policy are not open to an appeal.

New Supporting Documentation or New Grounds for an Appeal

(199) No new supporting documentation or grounds for appeal based on such supporting documentation will be considered unless:

- a. has been a major change in circumstance following the lodging of the initial supporting documentation which, in the view of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), justifies the subsequent, exceptional submission of the supporting documentation; and
- b. the new supporting documentation has a significant bearing on the appeal and that supporting documentation was not reasonably available at the time the earlier process was considered.

Submission of an Appeal

(200) An appeal must be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) within 20 working days of notification of any decision in respect of which the appeal is submitted.

(201) An appeal must:

- a. be submitted in writing;
- b. be dated and signed by the candidate;
- c. set out the grounds for the appeal under clauses (195) to (198) of these Regulations;
- d. provide details of the subject matter of the appeal and, in particular, details of the decision against which the appeal is made;
- e. provide details of the published University regulation, rule or policy which the candidate considers has not been observed; and
- f. include copies of any evidence / supporting information on which the candidate relies.

(202) The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within five working days of receiving it.

Action by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)

(203) If the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) considers that the candidate's appeal does not satisfy the appeal criteria set out in clauses (200) to (202) of these Regulations, or does not establish a prima facie case, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) may dismiss the appeal.

(204) If the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) considers that the candidate's appeal introduces new supporting documentation (refer clause (199) of these Regulations), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) may refer the matter back to the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee or Research Candidate Review Committee, as appropriate, for reconsideration in light of the new evidence.

(205) Upon consideration of the grounds of appeal, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) may refer the matter back to the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee or the Research Candidate Review Committee, as appropriate, for reconsideration of its decision.

(206) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) may refer the matter to the Research Candidate Appeals Committee.

Matters Referred to the Research Candidate Appeals Committee

(207) The Research Candidate Appeals Committee will comprise:

- a. the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (Chair);
- b. the Chair, Academic Board;
- c. a senior academic from within the University (nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)); and
- d. a research candidate representative from within the University (nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)).

(208) A person who has been a decision-maker in the matter under appeal will not be appointed to the Committee.

(209) The quorum for a meeting of the Committee will be three members including the research candidate representative.

(210) The Research Candidate Appeals Committee will:

- a. conduct the appeal as expeditiously as possible, consistent with the requirement to act fairly;
- b. have access to all documentation used by the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee and / or the Research Candidate Review Committee, as appropriate;
- c. consider the information and documentation used by the Research Candidate Academic Progress Committee and / or the Academic Progress Review Committee, together with any further evidence requested from and presented by the University and / or the candidate; and
- d. provide the candidate with five working days' notice of the date of any meeting or interview they may be invited to attend.

(211) The Research Candidate Appeals Committee may:

- a. confirm or vary the decision appealed; or
- b. uphold the appeal.

(212) Normally within 10 working days of a decision of the Research Candidate Appeals Committee, the Chair will notify the candidate in writing of the decision, the process undertaken to consider the appeal, and the reasons for the

decision and any associated recommendations. In the case of an international candidate whose enrolment has been cancelled or terminated, the candidate will also be notified of the possible implications of the decision on their visa status.

(213) A copy of the decision will be provided to the candidate's Supervisors and Faculty Associate Dean, Research, and any other staff members who may need to take action as a result of the decision. A copy of the decision will be held by the Graduate Research School on the student record and, if the decision is to cancel or terminate enrolment, reported to the URC.

(214) The decision of the Research Candidate Appeals Committee is final and there is no avenue of appeal against the decision to any other person or Committee within the University.

Support During the Appeal Process

(215) In any discussions or interview in which a candidate participates during an appeal process, the candidate may, at their discretion, be accompanied by one other person, other than a person with a qualification in law, whom the candidate designates as their support person.

(216) A support person may not be a person who was involved in, associated with, or alleged to have been involved in or associated with the matter of the appeal.

(217) A support person may only make submissions on behalf of a candidate if invited to do so by the Chair of the Research Candidate Appeals Committee.

Candidate Attendance

(218) Failure of the candidate and / or the candidate's support person to appear for discussion or interview for any appeal before the Research Candidate Appeals Committee, at the time notified to them, will not prevent the Committee from proceeding to investigate and determine the matter.

Withdrawal of an Appeal

(219) At any time during an appeal process a candidate may withdraw an application, by notice to the Chair of the Research Candidate Appeals Committee. Upon such withdrawal, consideration of the appeal will normally be discontinued.

Candidate Status

(220) Unless the Vice-Chancellor and President otherwise directs, a candidate who has submitted an appeal may continue in their program of study until the decision on the appeal is notified to the candidate.

(221) In the case of an appeal against termination of enrolment for unsatisfactory academic progress, if the appeal is dismissed, the termination of enrolment will take effect from the date on which the Research Candidate Appeals Committee made its decision.

(222) In the case of an appeal involving an international candidate, the University will notify the relevant Australian Government department of any notifiable change to the candidate's enrolment.

Other Avenues for Appeal

(223) While candidates are encouraged to resolve any concerns that may have arisen from their status as a candidate of the University within ACU, nothing in the [Higher Degree Research Policy](#) detracts from the right of a candidate to access any other appeal or complaint mechanism available to the candidate as legislated in the relevant State or Territory. If any external process is initiated, the internal appeal process will cease.

(224) Following exhaustion of the internal appeal process, in the case of matters for which there is no specific external independent arbiter, a candidate may appeal to the University Visitor, who is an independent arbiter, external to the University. Any such appeal must be made in accordance with the [Independent Review of Appeals or Complaints Policy](#) and [Independent Review of Appeals or Complaints Procedure](#).

Applications for Appeal Involving Allegations Concerning a Staff Member

(225) In any case where a candidate's application for appeal includes allegations of misconduct of a member of staff which may be in contravention of the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) must seek the advice of the Chief People Officer, as to whether the matter should be considered under that Code.

(226) If a process under the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#) is commenced, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) may suspend the candidate's appeal pending the outcome of the process.

Section 24 - Conferral Of Awards

Eligibility for an Award

(227) To be eligible to be admitted to a research higher degree award, a candidate must:

- a. comply with all University statutes, rules, regulations, and policies and procedures;
- b. pay all relevant fees and charges; and
- c. complete all requirements prescribed for the course.

(228) Research higher degrees will be awarded without classification unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and Senate.

(229) The Doctor of Philosophy may be awarded summa cum laude in exceptional cases where the thesis has been identified as being of outstanding merit.

(230) The Doctor of Education may be awarded summa cum laude in exceptional cases where the candidate has obtained a GPA of 6.3 or higher in the doctoral coursework units and the thesis has been identified as being of outstanding merit.

Revocation or Rescission of an Award

(231) In instances where it has been confirmed that an award was wrongly conferred, either through administrative error or based on provision of falsified, fraudulent or misleading information, the University may rescind or revoke the award in accordance with procedures prescribed by the University.

Conferral of Award

(232) Awards will be conferred in accordance with the [Conferral and Graduation Policy](#).

Section 25 - Saving Clause

(233) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in these Regulations, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) or Director, Graduate Research School may, in any case deemed appropriate, including as part of Joint (Cotutelle) Degree agreements vary, dispense with or suspend any requirements of or prescription in these Regulations. Any such action must be reported to the next meeting of URC and the Academic Board.

Section 26 - Schedule: Research Higher Degrees

(234) The following research higher degrees are awarded by the University:

- a. Doctor of Education (EdD)
- b. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- c. Doctor of Ministry (DMin)
- d. Master of Education (Research) (MEd(Res))
- e. Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Conditions for the Award of Research Higher Degrees

(235) The conditions for the award of the following degrees shall be determined by the Academic Board on the advice of the URC and the Faculty Boards indicated:

- a. URC in Consultation with all Faculties of the University
 - i. Doctor of Philosophy
 - ii. Master of Philosophy
- b. Professional and other Research Higher Degrees
 - i. Faculty of Education and Arts
 - Doctor of Education
 - Master of Education (Research)
 - ii. Faculty of Theology and Philosophy
 - Doctor of Ministry

Duration of Candidature

(236) The requirements for the award of a research higher degree shall normally be met within the period indicated:

Degree	Duration	
EdD	Full-time: three years	Part-time: six years
PhD	Full-time: three years	Part-time: six years
DMin	Full-time: three years	Part-time: six years
MEd(Res)	Full-time: two years	Part-time: four years
MPhil	Full-time: two years	Part-time: four years

Section 27 - Appendices

Appendix A: Formal Communications

Correspondence to Candidates

(237) A notice or advice to an applicant / candidate is sufficient if it is in writing and is:

- a. posted to the candidate:
 - i. for admission purposes, at the address shown on the application for admission;

- ii. at the semester address shown on the candidate's most recent enrolment, if posted during a study period;
 - iii. at the home address shown on the candidate's most recent enrolment, if posted outside a study period;
- or
- b. emailed to the applicant / candidate:
 - i. for admission purposes, at the email address shown on the application for admission;
 - ii. for other purposes, to the candidate's University email address; or
- c. sent via electronic communication to a mobile phone number supplied by the candidate; or
- d. posted for candidates on ACU's learning management system, during any study period.

(238) Unless a later delivery date can be proven, any notice or advice is deemed to have been received:

- a. if sent by post to an address within Australia, on the fifth working day after it was sent;
- b. if sent by post to an address outside Australia by airmail, on the fifteenth working day after it was sent;
- c. if sent by email or electronic communication on the first working day after it was sent;
- d. if posted on ACU's learning management system, no later than 72 hours from the date and time on which it was posted.

Correspondence from Candidates

(239) Correspondence from a candidate will be deemed to be effective on the date of its receipt by the University.

(240) Any correspondence, document or form submitted to the University by a candidate becomes the property of the University unless, at the discretion of the University, the University elects to return the document or form to the candidate, with or without first having made a copy.

Change to Personal or Correspondence Details

(241) Candidates must formally notify the University immediately, in accordance with prescribed procedures, of:

- a. any change of name; or
- b. address; or
- c. mobile phone number.

Appendix B: Candidate Leave Entitlements

Entitlements for Candidates who are Receiving a Fortnightly Stipend Scholarship

(242) Research Training Program Stipend Scholarship Recipient paid leave entitlements are outlined in the [Research Training Program Scholarship Policy](#).

(243) Research Training Program Stipend Scholarship Recipients can also apply for unpaid leaves of absence (suspension) as per Section 13 of these Regulations.

(244) Recipients of other ACU stipend scholarships should refer to their Scholarship Conditions of Award for details about their paid leave entitlements.

(245) Stipend scholarship holders in clause (244) may also be able to apply for unpaid leaves of absence (suspension). Holders should check their Conditions of Award for any limitations on leaves of absence.

(246) An application for paid additional sick leave must be accompanied by a medical certificate from a registered health practitioner.

(247) An application for paid parental leave must be accompanied by:

- a. a medical certificate from a registered health practitioner; or
- b. a Statutory Declaration to be provided by the candidate to verify they are the primary carer. The Statutory Declaration must clearly outline the circumstances upon which the candidate will be the primary carer including how, and in what way, they will be caring for the child.

(248) Applications for paid leave or suspension should be submitted via the prescribed process – see clause (116) and (117) of these Regulations.

Entitlements for Candidates who do not Receive a Stipend Scholarship

(249) This applies to candidates who either pay fees for their program of enrolment or who are receiving an ACU tuition fee waiver without stipend or who are receiving a Research Training Program Fees Offset Scholarship (RTPFO) without stipend.

(250) Recreation Leave

- a. Candidates are entitled to up to 20 working days' recreation leave each year of candidature calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- b. Recreation leave may be accrued and must be agreed with and recorded by the Principal Supervisor.
- c. Recreation leave does not alter a candidate's thesis submission date.

(251) Sick Leave

- a. Candidates are entitled to receive up to 10 working days' sick leave each year calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- b. In the event of such illness, candidates are required to notify their supervisors as soon as possible.
- c. Sick leave as outlined in clause (251)a. of these Regulations, does not alter a candidate's thesis submission date.
- d. Sick leave as outlined in clause (251)a. of these Regulations, does not need to be submitted through Orion.
- e. Candidates who are unwell for longer than 10 working days pro-rata, should apply for a suspension of candidature per the normal suspension process until they have recovered and can return to their studies.

Other Leave

(252) Candidates who require leave for circumstances outside of clauses (251)a. and (251)b. of these Regulations should apply for a suspension of candidature per the prescribed process in clauses (116) and (117) of these Regulations.

Appendix C: English Language Requirements For HDR Candidates

Program	IELTS (Academic) [International English Language Testing System]	PTE [Pearson Test of English]	TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language - Academic]	ACU Test [ACU English Language Test]	CAE [Cambridge Advanced English]
Doctor of Education (EdD)	Overall score: 6.5 Individual score of: 6.0 in all tests	61 with a minimum of 50 in all four communicative skills	Internet based total of 90: minimum 21 in writing, 18 in speaking, 20 in reading and 19 in listening	B (65-74%)	Overall CAE score: 176 Minimum score of 169 in all tests.

Program	IELTS (Academic) [International English Language Testing System]	PTE [Pearson Test of English]	TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language - Academic]	ACU Test [ACU English Language Test]	CAE [Cambridge Advanced English]
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	Overall score: 6.5 Individual score of: 6.0 in all tests	61 with a minimum of 50 in all four communicative skills	Internet based total of 90: minimum 21 in writing, 18 in speaking, 20 in reading and 19 in listening	B (65-74%)	Overall CAE score: 176 Minimum score of 169 in all tests.
Doctor of Ministry (DMin)	Overall score 6.5; Individual score of 6.0 in all tests	61 with a minimum of 50 in all four communicative skills	Internet based total of 90; minimum 21 in writing, 18 in speaking, 20 in reading and 19 in listening	B (65-74%)	Overall CAE of 176; Minimum individual score of 169 in all tests
Master of Education (Research) [MEd(Res)]	Overall score: 7.0 Individual score of 6.0 in all tests	68 with a minimum of 50 in all four communicative skills	Internet based total of 100: 21 in writing, 18 in speaking, 20 in reading and 19 in listening	A (75-100%)	Overall CAE of 185 Minimum individual score of 169 in all tests.
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)	Overall score: 6.5 Individual score of: 6.0 in all tests	61 with a minimum of 50 in all four communicative skills	Internet based total of 90: minimum 21 in writing, 18 in speaking, 20 in reading and 19 in listening	B (65-74%)	Overall CAE score: 176 Minimum score of 169 in all tests.

Appendix D - ACU's Higher Degree Research Graduate Attributes and Learning Outcomes

(253) ACU's Higher Degree Research (HDR) programs deliver quality education and research opportunities that cultivate a comprehensive set of graduate attributes (described below), fostering candidates' self-confidence, independent thinking, and creativity which not only enhance their future employment prospects, but also prepares them to be leaders in their chosen field advancing academia, industry, and the wider society.

Graduate attributes	Learning outcomes	ACU Higher Degree Research Program
Research Excellence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critically review and synthesise complex concepts from different sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of relevant prior research. 2. Conduct original and impactful research that addresses significant problems and advances knowledge. 3. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of research principles, ethics, and methodologies. 	ACU provides rigorous training, resources, mentorship, and a focus on ethical principles, equipping candidates with robust research skills and fostering an innovative mindset for groundbreaking contributions to their disciplines.
Academic Integrity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uphold academic integrity and demonstrate a scholarly approach to knowledge generation. 2. Command authoritative knowledge in the chosen discipline or cross-discipline. 3. Critically evaluate, synthesise existing knowledge, and communicate it effectively for educational purposes. 	ACU prioritises academic integrity, open research methods, research skills, and critical thinking within dedicated faculties, facilities, and a robust research community supporting engagement in discourse, conferences, and publications for comprehensive expertise in their disciplines.

Graduate attributes	Learning outcomes	ACU Higher Degree Research Program
Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead and perform independent research within the discipline or cross-discipline. 2. Communicate research outcomes effectively to the wider research, business, and government communities via peer reviewed publications or professional outcomes, participation in specialist and generalist conferences, public forums and other professional contexts. 3. Work independently as well as collaboratively within diverse teams and contexts, inspiring and mentoring others. 	ACU actively prioritises leadership development in HDR candidates, aspiring to create graduates who drive positive societal change by fostering skills such as effective communication, project management, and mentorship through research project ownership, community engagement, and collaboration within academic and professional networks.
Global Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate a deep understanding of the global body of knowledge in the chosen discipline or cross-disciplinary field. 2. Communicate research outcomes to the global research community, contributing to international discourse. 	ACU prioritises graduates making positive societal impacts by ensuring real-world relevance in research, encouraging exploration of practical implications, and providing opportunities for broad dissemination, fostering a culture of engagement and impactful contributions to communities and professions.
Social Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop social engagement through knowledge exchange, social enterprise, community building, equity and diversity, and policy development. 2. Embrace university values, including Diversity, Respect, Excellence, Collaboration, Innovation and a deeper understanding Indigenous knowledges and culture. 3. Develop a personalised career strategy for future study or employment, emphasising life-long learning. 	<p>ACU encourages a range of engagement activities aligned with the discipline and ACU's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACU Strategic Plan, outlining the: values (impact through empathy, truth and love); mission (knowledge pursuit, the human's dignity and the common good); and vision (hope, faith and reason through opportunity, innovation and ethics). • Research and Enterprise Plan, emphasising sustainable excellence in developing: future research capability; effective infrastructure and systems; and research translation into real world benefits.

(254) Additional Information: ACU aligns its HDR program with the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (AQF) standards, emphasising research excellence, academic integrity, leadership, and societal impact, through a supportive environment, rigorous training, and ample resources spanning from certificate 1 to doctoral degrees, thereby contributing to global recognition of Australian education and research.

Section 28 - Review

(255) Unless otherwise indicated, this Regulation will still apply beyond the review date.

Section 29 - Associated Information

(256) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	15th May 2025
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Approval Date	15th May 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Abid Khan Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Responsible Manager	Michelle Lopez Director, Graduate Research School
Enquiries Contact	Michelle Lopez Director, Graduate Research School <hr/> Graduate Research School