HDR Supervision Procedure

Section 1 - Governing Policy

(1) This Procedure is governed by the Higher Degree by Research Policy.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) Australian Catholic University (henceforth “ACU” or “the University”) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of excellence in research supervision and training and views Higher Degree by Research (HDR) supervision as a specialised academic role, encompassing education, research, and mentorship. Quality supervision is essential for upholding responsible research conduct, developing a candidate’s research and employability skills, and ensuring timely course completion.

(3) The HDR Supervision Procedure (henceforth “the Procedure”) establishes the responsibilities that lie with HDR Supervisors and HDR candidates to ensure that these standards are maintained, and that the milestones of candidature are met in a timely manner.

(4) This Procedure sets expectations for high-quality supervision, promotes best practice, and ensures compliance with legal requirements.

Section 3 - Scope of Procedure

(5) The Procedure applies to ACU appointed HDR supervisors, candidates enrolled in an HDR program, and all members of the supervisory team involved in the supervision of candidates.

(6) This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Higher Degree by Research Policy, the University’s Research Code of Conduct, the Research Active Definition Policy, and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018.

(7) The Procedure outlines the responsibilities, processes, and expectations for HDR supervisors and candidates, focusing on fostering effective supervisory relationships and the timely progression of candidates, in line with the Good Practice Guidelines outlined by the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) on Quality Graduate Research Supervision, Mental Health and Wellbeing in Graduate Research Education, and Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research, and the Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships.

Section 4 - HDR Supervision Procedure

Part A - HDR Supervisory Roles

(8) of the HDR supervisory team (the Principal Supervisor, the Co-Supervisor/s and the External Supervisors) are detailed in Part E of this Section as well as the Responsibilities of the HDR Candidate and Supervisory Team.

(9) The Principal Supervisor is an ACU academic staff member who is ACU-accredited as an HDR supervisor (Full) and

is responsible for the provision of guidance and assistance to a candidate in the undertaking of the relevant degree requirements. The Principal Supervisor is the academic leader of the HDR supervisory team and is responsible and accountable for the management of the candidate's candidature from enrolment to final thesis examination.

(10) A Co-Supervisor is an ACU academic staff member who is ACU-accredited as an HDR supervisor (Full or Provisional) and is appointed to the candidate's supervisory team to support the Principal Supervisor in the provision of guidance and assistance to the candidate.

(11) An External Supervisor is a specialist in the discipline from outside ACU who can provide relevant research expertise to the supervision of the candidate. The External Supervisor is appointed to the candidate's supervisory team to supplement the supervision provided by the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor/s.

(12) An External Supervisor (End-User) is a specialist from an end-user (organisation) external to ACU who can provide expertise to the supervision of an HDR candidate and who will directly use or directly benefit from the research. An External Supervisor (End-user) supplements the supervision provided by the ACU Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor. ACU applies the ARC definition of a research end-user—i.e. the person(s) or organisation(s) that will use or benefit from the product or service arising from the research—when it appoints an External Supervisor (End-user).

Part B - Supervisor Accreditation and Professional Development

(13) A register will be maintained by the Graduate Research School of Accredited Supervisors, in line with ACGR's Good Practice on Quality Graduate Research Supervision.

(14) The register will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Graduate Research School to ensure a continual evaluation of supervisors and any requirements for renewal/ accreditation to ensure it is up to date. Accreditation is valid for five (5) years. Supervisors will be notified three (3) months prior to the expiry of accreditation with instructions on how to apply for renewal.

(15) A person's accreditation will automatically lapse where they:

a. have not renewed their accreditation prior to the end of the five (5) year accreditation period; or
b. they cease to hold an ACU academic staff or adjunct appointment

(16) There are two levels of accreditation at ACU. Academic staff may seek accreditation as either an HDR Supervisor (Full) or an HDR Supervisor (Provisional).

(17) To be eligible for accreditation as an HDR Supervisor (Full or Provisional) the requirements outlined in the Supervision Accreditation Framework must be met.

(18) Staff should discuss their potential application for supervisor accreditation with the Faculty Associate Dean of Research (ADR) prior to submitting a request for accreditation via the prescribed process.

(19) Accreditation of all supervisors is approved by the Faculty ADR according to the requirements in the Supervision Accreditation Framework.

(20) Staff who are Honorary and Adjunct Appointments may be accredited as HDR Supervisors (Full or Provisional) at ACU with the approval of the Faculty ADR.

(21) Following accreditation as an HDR Supervisor (Full or Provisional), a staff member can be assigned to a role on a candidate's supervisory panel. Refer to the Parts D to Part F for details on the roles, the responsibilities and the composition requirements of supervisory panels for candidates.

(22) It is a responsibility of the Principal Supervisor to ensure they remain research active, as per the Supervision

Accreditation Framework, in the discipline relevant to the thesis project throughout the HDR candidate's candidature.

(23) If an HDR Supervisor (Full or Provisional) no longer meets the requirements for accreditation as stipulated by the Supervision Accreditation Framework, or if they fail to comply with ACU's Policies and Procedures, their accreditation may be reviewed and amended by the Faculty ADR.

(24) HDR supervisors (Full and Provisional) are expected to develop their supervision skills in accordance with AGCR's Good Practice Guidelines on Quality Graduate Research Supervision through participation in University training programs, supervision training programs and through the practice of supervision.

Part C - Eligibility for Appointment to an HDR Supervisory Team

(25) An ACU academic staff member who has been accredited as an HDR supervisor (Full) or an HDR supervisor (Provisional) via the prescribed process in Part B may be appointed to a role on an HDR candidate's supervisory team in accordance with the Supervisor Accreditation Framework.

(26) Non-ACU academics who can contribute expertise to the supervision of a candidate may be appointed to the role of External Supervisor or an External Supervisor (End-user).

(27) A person cannot be appointed as a supervisor if they themselves are an HDR Candidate, either at ACU or another institution.

(28) As a supervisor, a person must actively avoid any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest that are incompatible with the University's Declaration of Interest Policy - Staff and Affiliates and should ensure there are no conflicts in line with ACGR's Good Practice Guidelines for Guidelines for Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research.

Part D - Composition of the HDR Supervisory Team

(29) A candidate's supervisory team must comprise at least two internal supervisors, one of whom must undertake the role of Principal Supervisor. Both internal supervisors must be salaried academic staff employed by ACU (i.e. not adjuncts).

(30) The supervisory team must always include a Principal or Co-supervisor who has supervised at least one (1) HDR candidate to completion.

a. When this is the Co-supervisor, they must also be classified as active in research within the discipline/s they will be supervising in, to the satisfaction of the Faculty ADR.

(31) The Principal Supervisor must normally be in the academic unit in which the candidate is enrolled, unless otherwise approved by the relevant Faculty ADR.

(32) After consultation with the Head of School or Institute Director, the Faculty ADR approves initial appointment of supervisors to a candidate's supervisory team, and changes to supervisory teams outlined in Parts C and Part D and the continuity of supervision outlined in Part F.

(33) In approving the appointment of a supervisor and any subsequent changes to supervision the Faculty ADR or equivalent should consider whether the supervisor:

a. has demonstrated that they have the appropriate qualifications, research skills and experience to support the candidate's approved research project, and is able to provide sufficient research facilities where required;
b. has been accredited as required for the purposes of the specific supervisory appointment;

c. has sufficient capacity in their workload to provide high-quality supervisory support; and
d. is willing to supervise the candidate - in the case of appointment as principal supervisor - for the full period of their enrolment in the higher degree by research.

(34) The Faculty ADR is responsible for assessing the appropriateness of External Supervisors, and a current CV must be held on file.

Part E - Responsibilities of the HDR Supervisory Team

(35) Supervisors and candidates must discuss their respective roles, and the expectations and the requirements of the degree. They must reach and document a common understanding of key project aims, key milestones, proposed timeline, and methods of working together. This must be incorporated in a supervision agreement that is submitted to the Faculty ADR.

(36) Candidates and their supervisors must periodically revisit roles, expectations, and program requirements to ensure that the candidate's project stays on track.

(37) Supervisors and candidates are required to maintain clear communication, which means actively identifying and resolving any misunderstandings or divergent expectations as they arise.

(38) Providing and receiving critical feedback, and learning how to use it effectively, are integral aspects of the research process. Supervisors and candidates should undertake these activities respectfully and with a common focus on producing quality learning as well as quality work in a respectful environment.

Principal Supervisor

(39) The Principal Supervisor is the academic leader of the HDR supervisory team and has official responsibility for the overall management of the candidate's candidature from enrolment to final thesis examination. The Principal Supervisor's responsibilities are outlined in Responsibilities of the HDR Candidate and Supervisory Team.

(40) The Principal Supervisor is responsible for ensuring they remain research active, as assessed by the Research Active Definition Policy, in the discipline relevant to the thesis throughout the candidate's candidature.

(41) Where a candidate's research involves an external party (for example, the candidate is involved in a collaborative research project involving another party either in Australia or abroad) the Principal Supervisor must ensure that:

a. a valid agreement is in place prior to the candidate commencing their research, and remains in place throughout the duration of the candidate's research; and
b. the candidate is made aware of all obligations in the agreement that may potentially impact on the candidate's research including relevant induction and OH&S requirements.

(42) Where an HDR candidate is an international student studying on a student visa:

a. the Principal Supervisor must monitor engagement and academic progress; escalate concerns or delays promptly through approved HDR processes; refer all matters that may affect enrolment or visa status through formal University processes; ensure no supervision or research activity occurs during periods of approved leave, suspension, or non-enrolment; and refer wellbeing matters to appropriate University support services; and
b. The Principal Supervisor must not provide visa or immigration advice, manage PRISMS or Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) records, or approve enrolment changes outside formal University processes

Co-Supervisor

(43) The Co-Supervisor assists the Principal Supervisor in managing the candidate's candidature. The Co-Supervisor's responsibilities are outlined in Responsibilities of the HDR Candidate and Supervisory Team.

(44) To ensure clarity, the Co-Supervisor's specific role within each HDR supervisory Team should be negotiated and agreed between the Principal Supervisor, the Co-Supervisor and candidate early in candidature.

(45) Following the completion of each candidate milestone, the Principal Supervisor, Co-Supervisor and candidate should discuss and agree any updates required to the Co-Supervisor's role.

External Supervisor

(46) The External Supervisor provides specialist knowledge to support the HDR supervisory team and the candidate's research. The External Supervisor's responsibilities are outlined in Responsibilities of the HDR Candidate and Supervisory Team.

(47) The External Supervisor (End-user) provides specialist knowledge to support the HDR supervisory team and the candidate's research. The External Supervisor's (End-user) responsibilities are outlined in Responsibilities of the HDR Candidate and Supervisory Team.

(48) The role of the HDR supervisory team is to provide cohesive advice and assistance to the candidate with regards to any aspect of their candidature.

Part F - Changes to the Supervision Arrangements

(49) When a supervisor agrees to be appointed to a supervisory team, they will commit to be available to supervise the candidate for the duration of candidature.

(50) The decision to appoint a supervisor or change a supervisor is made by the relevant Faculty ADR following consultation with the Head of School or Institute Director and must be in accordance with the eligibility of the supervisor and composition of the supervisory team outlined in Part C and Part D.

Changes to Supervisory Team

(51) The Head of School or Institute Director may initiate a change in supervision arrangements where:

a. there is a change in research direction that necessitates a change in supervision;
b. a change is required to meet external regulatory or legislative requirements;
c. poor performance or concerns regarding staff conduct are identified;
d. after attempts to resolve difficulties have been exhausted and there is an irrevocable breakdown in candidate-supervisor relationship;
e. a supervisor ceases their employment with the University before the candidate completes their HDR degree;
f. a Principal Supervisor is unavailable for two (2) or more consecutive months and a temporary supervisor is required to ensure ongoing management of the candidature; or
g. a supervisor has been removed from the Supervisor Register by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research.

(52) Candidates seeking to make change/s to their supervisory team should:

a. discuss the proposed change/s with their supervisory team and Head of School or Institute Director (or academic delegate such as the Faculty ADR), unless there are compelling reasons not to do so; and
b. seek advice where appropriate from the Head of School or Institute Director (or academic delegate such as the

Faculty ADR) on any potential impact of a change of supervisory team on:

i. sourcing alternative suitable supervisors in the candidate's academic school/faculty/University-level;
ii. the candidate's ongoing enrolment in their course of study; their progress, including pending progress milestones; their approved research project; IP arrangements, scholarship; and other funding arrangements; and
iii. ongoing access to particular resources, particularly where resources are linked to a withdrawing supervisor or to a particular grant to which a withdrawing supervisor is linked (for example, in a Chief Investigator capacity).

Changes in Supervisor Circumstances

(53) Where a supervisor intends to leave the University, the Faculty ADR must make all reasonable efforts to ensure alternative supervision arrangements are finalised prior to the supervisor's departure.

(54) In making alternative supervision arrangements under clause (50), the Head of School or Institute Director should:

a. Discuss the proposed arrangements with the affected candidate(s); and
b. Consider the capacity of the school or institute to provide sufficient facilities and resources to support the candidate's research.

(55) If alternative supervision arrangements cannot be made following all reasonable efforts, the Head of School or Institute Director must advise the candidate that this may result in termination of enrolment.

(56) The Faculty ADR will review the composition of any HDR supervisory teams to which the staff member is currently appointed to ensure the remaining composition is in accordance with Part D of this procedure.

(57) The Faculty ADR will oversee the completion of a change of supervision request and appoint an appropriate replacement HDR supervisor (Full or Provisional).

(58) When supervisory teams are changed, consideration must be given to any changes required to ethics approvals, data management, authorship plans and acknowledgements, and similar arrangements.

Part G - Raising Concerns, Conflicts, and Safety Matters

(59) Unless there is a compelling reason to do so, and while noting the inherent power imbalance in the relationship, an HDR candidate and their supervisor/s should in the first instance attempt to resolve a conflict informally and in a professional manner.

(60) A candidate who has concerns regarding the supervision they are receiving, and who has been unable to resolve the matter through discussions with their HDR supervisory team, is encouraged to contact their HDR Coordinator.

a. Where the HDR Coordinator is a member of the HDR supervisory team, the candidate is encouraged to contact the Head of School/Institute Director.
b. Where the HDR Coordinator and the Head of School/Institute Director are both members of the HDR supervisory team, the candidate is encouraged to contact the Faculty ADR.

(61) An HDR supervisory team member who has concerns regarding the supervision being provided to the candidate or who has concerns regarding other matters within the HDR supervisory team, and who has been unable to resolve the matter through discussions with their HDR supervisory team, is required to contact their Head of School/Institute Director or Faculty ADR.

(62) When a conflict cannot be resolved informally, a candidate is encouraged to:

a. seek advice from the Graduate Research School.
b. be guided by the instructions within the Research Code of Conduct and the associated Research Complaints and Investigations Procedure if the matter is related to the conduct or integrity of research.
c. also follow guidance from Research Integrity and contact a Research Integrity Advisor.

(63) The University is committed to providing a safe and respectful research and learning environment. Staff and HDR candidates who experience or witness sexual assault, sexual harassment, or any form of sexual misconduct are encouraged to seek support and make a report. Reports can be made through the University's Respect. Now. Always. framework via the Sexual Misconduct Report Form, or by contacting the Respectful Relationships Unit.

Part H - Authorship

(64) It is the responsibility of HDR supervisors and candidates to adhere to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 and to the Research Authorship Policy and to any related research policies including those of funding bodies such as the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Where research data is sourced from external providers, author attribution for this data is to be consistent with provider requirements.

(65) The candidate and the HDR supervisory team should, as early in the candidature as possible, discuss and agree on authorship matters including but not limited to authorship attribution including authorship order, publications and acknowledgment during, and after, the candidature (referring to the ACU Research Authorship Policy).

(66) Any agreements between the candidate and HDR supervisory team or individual supervisors regarding authorship matters should be documented.

(67) There should be open and mutual recognition of the candidate's and the supervisor's contribution on all published work arising from the project, as outlined in the ACU Research Authorship Policy.

(68) For a PhD by publication, on all papers, the candidate should be listed as the primary author and have contributed no less than 50% to that publication.

Part I - Conflict of Interest

– Conflict of Interest

(69) It is the responsibility of all parties mentioned in this Procedure to declare, as soon as is practicable, any conflict of interest that might impact upon the quality of supervision that a candidate receives. Refer to clauses 46 and 47 of the Research Code of Conduct as well as the AGRC's Good Practice Guidelines on Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research and Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships.

(70) Conflicts of interest can include an emotional (including a romantic and/or sexual) relationship between an HDR supervisor and a candidate. Such relationships are never appropriate and must be declared and managed in accordance with the Declaration of Interest Policy - Staff and Affiliates and the HDR Conflict of Interest Guidance.

(71) Any such conflicts of interest are to be addressed with reference to the requirements of this Policy, and in accordance with other relevant policies and guidelines pertaining to research candidature.

Section 5 - Further Assistance

(72) Any questions relating to the Procedure as outlined in this document, can be directed to:

a. Your Principal Supervisor;
b. The Faculty Office:
    i. Faculty of Education and Arts: FEA.HDR@acu.edu.au
    ii. Faculty of Health Sciences: FHS.ADR@acu.edu.au
    iii. Faculty of Law and Business: FLB.HDR@acu.edu.au
    iv. Faculty of Theology and Philosophy: ADRes.FTP@acu.edu.au
    v. Human and Digital Futures: Phil.Parker@acu.edu.au
c. The Graduate Research School: Grad.Research@acu.edu.au

Section 6 - Monitoring and Review

(73) The University Research Committee (URC) is responsible for the administration of research higher degrees, subject to the general supervision of the Academic Board.

(74) 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.

(75) The URC will report regularly to the Academic Board and make recommendations on the award of research higher degrees directly to the Board.

(76) The Graduate Research School is responsible for monitoring compliance with this procedure to ensure consistency, fairness, and alignment with University policies and external regulatory requirements. The Graduate Research School may recommend updates to improve HDR supervision processes as needed.

(77) The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) will ensure that the procedure aligns with the University's policies and external regulatory requirements.

(78) Comprehensive reviews of HDR programs are conducted normally every five (5) years but no later than seven (7) years. The reviews are informed by:

a. recommendations from panels convened for the purpose by the Director (Graduate Research School);
b. external referencing of the success of Student cohorts and Student satisfaction against comparable programs;
c. strategic priorities of the University; and
d. the results of regular interim monitoring.

Section 7 - Definitions

Term	Definition
Conflict of Interest	A situation in which a person has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of their official duties, responsibilities, or decision-making. All conflicts (actual, perceived, or potential) must be declared and managed in accordance with University policy.
Co-Supervisor	An ACU academic staff member who holds Full or Provisional supervisor accreditation and is appointed to support the Principal Supervisor in the supervision of an HDR candidate.
External Supervisor	A supervisor from outside ACU, appointed for their disciplinary expertise, who provides specialist input into the HDR candidate's research project.
External Supervisor (End-user)	A supervisor appointed from an industry, government, community, or other stakeholder organisation who provides applied or translational expertise relevant to the HDR project.
Faculty Associate Dean of Research (ADR)	The academic staff member in each Faculty responsible for oversight of HDR candidature, including approval of supervision appointments and ensuring supervision continuity.
Graduate Research School	The central administrative unit responsible for managing HDR candidature, including supervisor accreditation, policy implementation, and milestone tracking.
HDR Candidate	Means a student undertaking a Doctorate degree or a Master's (Research) degree.
Principal Supervisor	An ACU academic staff member with Full supervisor accreditation who leads the HDR supervisory team and has overall responsibility for managing the candidate's progress from enrolment to thesis submission.
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research (PVCR)	The senior academic leader responsible for research and research training at ACU. The PVCR oversees HDR governance, including approval of examiners, examination outcomes, and alignment of HDR procedures with institutional and external regulatory requirements.
Research Active	A designation assigned to academic staff who meet the research output and engagement requirements as defined in the University's Research Active Definition Policy. Supervisors must remain research active in the discipline relevant to the HDR project.
Supervision Framework	The University's framework outlining the eligibility, roles, responsibilities, and accreditation requirements for HDR supervisors.
Supervisory Team	The full group of supervisors appointed to support an HDR candidate, which includes the Principal Supervisor and may include Co-Supervisors and/or External Supervisors.
Supervisor Accreditation	The formal process through which ACU academic staff are recognised as eligible to supervise HDR candidates, at either Full or Provisional level, in accordance with the Supervision Framework.

Status and Details

Status	Future
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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 --- Research and Enterprise