HDR Candidate Management 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 supporting the candidate journey and successful completion of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) courses.

(3) The HDR Candidature Management Procedure (henceforth “the Procedure”) establishes the requirements and processes for HDR Supervisors and HDR candidates to ensure that candidates receive appropriate support and monitoring to achieve timely and high-quality research outcomes. It ensures a consistent approach with the Australian Council of Graduate Research’s (ACGR) Good Practice Guidelines on Tracking Graduate Research Candidates.

Section 3 - Scope of Procedure

(4) The Procedure applies to all HDR candidates enrolled at ACU and all ACU staff involved in the management and support of HDR candidature progression.

(5) The Procedure outlines key milestones, progress reviews, variations to candidature and support mechanisms for HDR candidates.

(6) The Procedure is to be read in conjunction with the Higher Degree by Research Policy and the University’s Research Code of Conduct.

Section 4 - Candidate Requirement and Responsibilites

(7) All HDR candidates must maintain continuous enrolment in their HDR course unless on an approved leave of absence, as outlined in Section 5 (Part C) of this Procedure.

(8) New HDR candidates must complete an induction program coordinated by the Graduate Research School (GRS) and a local level induction within their faculties in their first semester of enrolment.

(9) All HDR candidates must have appropriate research guidance and supervision as outlined by the HDR Supervision Procedure and in line with ACGR’s Good Practice Guidelines on Quality Graduate Research Supervision.

(10) It is the responsibility of the Principal Supervisor to consult with the Head of School / Institute Director to ensure that any equipment, materials, or support necessary to the conduct of research, and which have been approved during the admission process, are made available to the candidate in a timely manner and as soon after

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commencement as possible

(11) A candidate enrolled in an HDR course will complete the degree requirements within the required period:

a. For Doctoral candidates, this is three years full-time (or six years part-time equivalent); and
b. For Master's (Research) candidates, this is two years full-time (or four years part-time equivalent).

(12) Duration of candidature in an HDR course will not be less than one year full-time (or part-time equivalent).

(13) A period of extension of candidature may be permitted under certain circumstances (in line with Section 5 (Part B) of this Procedure).

(14) The candidate's responsibilities are outlined in Responsibilities of the HDR Candidate and Supervisory Team.

Section 5 - Variations to Enrolment and Candidature

Part A - External (Off-Campus) Enrolment

(15) External enrolment can only be approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research (PVCR) (or nominee), upon receiving endorsement from the School or Institute, and the Faculty where the following requirements are met:

a. the course has been approved to offer external enrolment;
b. the course allows for external enrolment at the student's stage of enrolment in the course;
c. the candidate will have access to the research facilities and resources required to successfully undertake their research project, including appropriate supervisory arrangements, for the full duration of their external enrolment; and
d. where the candidate's research involves a third party:
    - the candidate will be provided with the supervision necessary for their project to be conducted safely and without health risks, as far as reasonably practicable;
    - the student is provided with training in relevant emergency, safety and evacuation procedures where required, and has access to counselling and other appropriate ancillary support services; and
    - an agreement is in place prior to the student commencing at their place of external enrolment.

(16) External enrolment will not be approved in the following circumstances:

a. the intended off-campus research location is within daily commuting distance of the campus of enrolment, other than in exceptional circumstances.
b. for international candidates subject to Education for Overseas Students (ESOS) requirements, other than in compassionate and compelling circumstances.
c. the course does not permit external enrolment.
d. Candidates who are in receipt of a scholarship that falls within the scope of the HDR Scholarship Procedure will only be approved to enrol via external mode under limited circumstances.

(17) In the event that an international candidate subject to ESOS requirements is approved to enrol via external enrolment mode, variation of the candidate's course will be completed by the University and the Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) status of the student will be updated accordingly.

Part B - Changes to Candidature

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

a. change of study mode (full-/part-time);
b. study away;
c. fieldwork;
d. change to supervision arrangements, in line with the conditions outlined in the HDR Supervisory Procedure;
e. suspension of candidature (interruption of studies);
f. extension of thesis submission date; and
g. extension of stipend or tuition scholarship.

(19) An application must be made through the relevant Faculty and set out in full the reasons for the request, as well as provide documentary evidence as required by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) (or nominee).

(20) Candidates who wish to transfer from full-time to part-time enrolment must consider the impact of any terms and conditions of their visa and scholarship, including the impact on meeting the requirements of their course, including coursework units, professional development training, and progress milestones.

(21) To change their thesis or research topic, international candidates must seek approval from the Minister through the Department of Home Affairs, as outlined by condition 8203 in the visa details and conditions.

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

Part-time Enrolment for International Candidates

(23) International candidates subject to ESOS requirements can be approved to enrol on a part-time basis when:

a. compassionate or compelling circumstances are deemed to apply; or
b. an intervention strategy has been implemented to assist the candidate at risk of unsatisfactory progress.

(24) Where there is a variation in the enrolment load of an international candidate subject to ESOS requirements and the enrolment load will affect the candidate's expected duration of study, the variation and the reasons will be recorded on the candidate file.

(25) Where the variation leads to an extension of the expected duration of study, the student must apply for a new CoE.

Fieldwork/Study Away

(26) A candidate may request a period of travel to engage in fieldwork, attend conferences or complete other research related activities during candidature according to the prescribed process.

(27) The responsibility for assessing and approving an application for study away resides with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) (or nominee). Any fieldwork proposed to be undertaken outside Australia will be assessed subject to travel advisories at the time as issued by the Australian Government. Refer to Section 13 of the University's Travel Policy and the University's Insurance Policy for further information.

(28) Applications for study away must be approved in advance of commencement of the study away period.

(29) Candidates who have been approved for study away must maintain their enrolment and must confirm their return from study away once their approved period has ended. Failure to advise the University of return to study by the

required timeframe may result in cancellation of enrolment.

(30) An approved period of study away/fieldwork does not impact candidature dates.

Part C - Leave Entitlements

Annual Leave

(31) HDR candidates are entitled to receive up to 20 working days' annual leave for each year of the course. Part-time students are entitled to a maximum of 10 working days of annual leave per year. These leave entitlements may be accrued over the life of the course.

(32) Agreement of the HDR candidate's Principal Supervisor must be obtained before recreation leave is taken.

(33) Periods of annual leave will not affect the Thesis Submission Date.

Leave of Absence/Suspension of Candidature

(34) Candidates can apply for leave of absence during their course for a period of 10 working days or more at any one time for:

a. leave for personal and professional commitments;
b. sick leave or carer's leave;
c. defence reserve service leave;
d. jury service (for a period longer than 5 working days);
e. firefighting and emergency assistance; and
f. family violence leave.

(35) Leave of absence must not exceed a cumulative amount of 12 months during the course for both Doctorate and Masters (Research) candidates, unless in exceptional circumstances.

(36) Requests for a suspension of candidature made prior to a candidate being confirmed in their candidature will only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions will be considered for medical conditions 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 that verifies 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.

(37) 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.

(38) The Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) (or nominee) is responsible for assessing requests for a suspension of candidature.

(39) Candidates must consider the impact the planned leave will have on their ability to meet milestones and other requirements of their course, and any academic and financial penalties related to coursework units.

(40) If the candidate is also an ACU staff member, they must apply separately for staff leave in the employee system where applicable.

Restriction on Taking a Leave of Absence

(41) Leave of absence is not permitted in the first or last six calendar months of enrolment in a course (full-time or part-time enrolment), unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances can include a family violence situation, illness or incapacity which affects the student's capacity to meet their obligations as a student of the University, or illness, injury or an unexpected emergency affecting a family member that requires the student to take carer's leave.

(42) International candidates subject to ESOS requirements may only be granted leave of absence in compassionate or compelling circumstances.

Parental and Adoption Leave

(43) In addition to the leave of absence entitlements in clause (34) of this Procedure, candidates can apply for:

a. up to 12 months leave to cover maternity leave, parental leave (spouse/domestic partner leave), or adoption leave where they are the primary carer of the child; or
b. additional parental, maternity or adoption leave of up to 12 months where they are the primary carer of any subsequent child.

(44) Any requests for parental, maternity or adoption leave beyond the maximum entitlement will only be considered by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) (or nominee) in exceptional circumstances.

(45) Parental, maternity or adoption leave entitlements are in addition to leave of absence and annual leave entitlements.

Approved Leave Conditions

(46) on approved leave, a student is not permitted to:

a. engage in supervised or assessable research activity (e.g., data collection, formal supervision meetings, or thesis submission); or
b. undertake any other activities that form part of their course, including undertaking coursework units or professional development training.

Returning from Approved Leave

(47) Students on approved leave must confirm their return to study once the leave period has ended.

(48) In limited circumstances, international students subject to ESOS requirements will be issued a new CoE once their return to study has been processed.

Students on Scholarship or Stipend

(49) If the HDR candidate is receiving a scholarship or a stipend, they should refer to the leave entitlements outlined in the HDR Scholarship Procedure.

Part D - Extensions to the Thesis Submission Date

(50) Students may apply for an extension to their Thesis Submission Date following successful completion of their Final Review. Specific extension provisions are as follows for doctoral courses.

(51) Students can apply for extensions to the Thesis Submission Date of up to twelve months to a maximum course

duration of four years EFT.

(52) Where a student seeks to apply to extend their Thesis Submission Date beyond four years EFT for a doctorate degree, their request must be reviewed by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) (or nominee). Such requests can only be approved where the delegate is satisfied that there were exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control that warrant the requested extension be granted and the application has the support of the Faculty Associate Dean of Research of the enrolling faculty.

(53) All applications for extension to the Thesis Submission Date beyond the standard 24 months EFT course duration for a Masters (Research) degree are to be reviewed by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) (or nominee). Such requests can only be approved where the delegate is satisfied that there were exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control that warrant the requested extension be granted and the application has the support of the Faculty Associate Dean of Research of the enrolling faculty.

Section 6 - Completion of Candidature

(54) To complete candidature, candidates must meet all requirements as outlined Section 6 of the HDR Examinations Procedure.

Section 7 - Further Assistance

(55) For queries relating to HDR candidature, candidates should contact:

a. Their Principal Supervisor;
b. Faculty HDR contacts:
    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. Graduate Research School: Grad.Research@acu.edu.au

Section 8 - Monitoring and Review

(56) The University Research Committee(URC) is responsible for overseeing HDR candidature management.

(57) The Graduate Research School (GRS) monitors policy compliance and updates.

(58) Comprehensive reviews of HDR candidature management will occur every five years, informed by HDR candidate feedback and success rates and benchmarked against national and international best practices and strategic priorities of the University.

Section 9 - Definitions

Term	Definition
Extension of Candidature	An approved extension beyond the standard duration of an HDR course due to exceptional circumstances, subject to approval and supporting documentation.

Term	Definition
Faculty ADR (Associate Dean Research)	The faculty-based academic responsible for HDR oversight, including approval of variations, review panels, and academic progress interventions.
Fieldwork/Study Away	Research related activities including fieldwork, conferences, industry-based experiences, intercampus mobility, joint award residency.
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Is responsible for administering the candidate life-cycle requirements of HDR candidates.
HDR Candidate	A student enrolled in an ACU Doctorate or Master's (Research) degree.
Leave Entitlements	Paid leave entitlements (recreation and sick leave) and associated conditions available to HDR candidates, including additional leave in special circumstances.
Variation to Candidature	Any approved change to a candidate's enrolment conditions, including supervision, enrolment mode, or period of study.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th November 2026
Review Date	19th November 2031
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	24th June 2026
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