
Research and Postgraduate Policies & Procedures

Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision Procedure

Policy Number:	1.6.2.40
Responsible Officer:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and International
Policy Editor/Contact:	Research Student Coordinator, Research Office
Approving Authority:	Senate
Date approved:	14 September 2016
Review date:	September 2018

This procedure is linked to: Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy

1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline good practices that can assist and support the highest quality postgraduate research candidate experience and outcomes.

2 Scope

The guidelines are for Heads of Schools, Associate Deans [Research] or equivalent, Research Student Coordinators, Faculty Research Committees or equivalent, supervisors, and candidates.

3 Procedure

3.a. Faculty /School Responsibilities:

i. Admission:

When considering an application for entry to a postgraduate research programme, it is the responsibility of the Associate Dean Research [ADR] or equivalent in consultation with the Head of School to ensure that:

- an applicant meets the academic and other entry requirements set down by the University for admission to candidature,
- there is an appropriate fit between the applicant, research environment, available resources and supervision capacity,
- a supervisor or supervisory panel is identified at the time the admission is approved,
- the candidate is advised of limitations to resources available for the research programmes,
- the expectations, practices and standards of the faculty and the school, with respect to postgraduate research, including the need for the candidate's commitment to intensive work and the time-frame for completion, should be clearly articulated to all successful applicants.

Applicants should conduct their own due diligence and discuss their needs and requirements including determining the resources and infrastructure available for their proposed research with potential supervisors prior to applying for candidature.

ii. Supervision:

The Faculty Research Committee [FRC] must ensure that those nominated, assigned, or appointed as supervisors can provide proper supervision by virtue of their qualifications, experience and their research interests.

The FRC must also seek assurance that those involved in supervision have sufficient time for supervision. The FRC must be satisfied that continuity in supervision can be maintained for the duration of candidature regardless of staff leave and other absences from the University.

The FRC is also responsible for encouraging good supervision practices for monitoring the supervision of candidates across the Faculty, and for taking action as appropriate to ensure that high-quality supervision is achieved in each case.

iii. Induction:

The relevant section(s) of the faculty must provide appropriate induction for new candidates. This should include a guide to the nature of research in the particular field, a description of the facilities available in the school, faculty, and elsewhere in the University (including library services, computing facilities, student support services), and the school programme of seminars. The resources and facilities available for the project should be discussed, and the procedures to be followed in accessing or utilising them should be explained.

- a) The nature and process of postgraduate research in the discipline should be discussed, and the role of the supervisor explained.
- b) There should be written information on the characteristic stages towards completion of theses in the field, and typical examples of time-frames.
- c) The responsibilities and rights of the candidate should be discussed.
- d) The Head of School should ensure that:
 - i. each candidate is advised of relevant administrative structures and committees of the University and their roles in relation to the candidate,
 - ii. each candidate is provided with written documentation setting out any formal requirements of the school and faculty, guidelines concerning ethics in research, and safety procedures, as appropriate to the discipline,
 - iii. each candidate is informed about general practice regarding authorship of publications within the discipline,
 - iv. copies of the Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision are available to each candidate.

iv. Resolving Conflicts

The Head of School must make every effort to resolve any difficulties arising during candidature. Where agreement is not reached on a resolution the matter will be referred to the relevant Associate Dean Research, and if necessary the Dean of Faculty. Where a conflict remains unresolved the Dean or student may refer the matter to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and International.

If the supervisory relationship breaks down, the Head of School must offer alternative arrangements for appropriate supervision, to be approved by the FRC.

3.b. Supervisor Responsibilities:

In addition to providing appropriate academic support, supervisors are responsible for a number of administrative procedures associated with candidature. Responsibilities vary depending on the stage of candidature, although in practice these discrete stages may overlap.

Some responsibilities described in this section apply only to the Principal Supervisor. When the term “supervisor” is used on its own, it applies to all members of the supervisory panel including secondary/external supervisors.

Each supervisor is required to be familiar with the Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy and related procedures, as well as with the Postgraduate Research Guidelines. The supervisors should provide guidance in all matters relating to good research practice. Each supervisor must be sensitive to the special needs of individual candidates and provide or advise on appropriate support.

The Principal Supervisor is responsible for the supervision process in all cases.

3.c. Before Candidature:

Where possible, intending applicants are encouraged to consult with academic staff members who may be able to supervise the proposed research topic. Where an applicant approaches an academic staff member to supervise, the staff member should assess and advise the Head of School on:

- whether the applicant's background and capacities in relation to the proposed programme are appropriate,
- whether the applicant's proposed research falls within their areas of expertise and experience,
- the suitability of the proposed topic for the research degree,
- whether they have the capacity to supervise the applicant based on their current supervisory load and supervisor eligibility status,
- the likely cost of the research project and other resource needs, particularly if these are likely to exceed the normal costs of research projects,
- what additional supervisory arrangements may be necessary to cover any periods of absence by the Principal Supervisor from the University,
- any third party arrangement that may affect the candidate and the proposed research.

3.d. Early in Candidature:

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- assist the candidate to develop, plan, and structure a realistic programme of study and research. This will include advising candidates on developing the topic/proposal that could be expected to lead to an intellectually rewarding investigation and the timely submission of a quality thesis
- provide guidance about:
 - the nature of research and the standard of performance expected

- planning the research programme and submission of a research proposal
- relevant literature, sources, and other contacts
- appropriate research methodologies and requisite techniques for the particular field
- attendance at classes/courses where appropriate (e.g., computer analysis, statistics)
- advise the candidate on:
 - safe working practices relevant to the field of research
 - the relevant issues relating to research conduct (e.g., academic conduct, copyright, etc.)
 - ethical practice and ethics clearance process
 - the University's Intellectual Property Policy
- assist the candidate with obtaining ethical clearance if required, and ensure the necessary ethical approvals are in place prior to commencement of the research
- suggest ways the candidate can make the most effective use of time
- clarify the candidate's and the supervisors' respective expectations of supervision and the operation of the supervisory panel
- establish, in conjunction with the candidate, the basis on which the close and regular contact between supervisors and candidate will be achieved. The supervisors and candidate are jointly responsible for initiating such contact. Normally there should be contact between the supervisors and candidate at least once a month even if a formal meeting is not always possible. This will facilitate the supervisors' role in advising the candidate on their research programme including the pace of progress, and ensure that a reasonable timetable is set to permit the degree programme to be completed in the appropriate time
- advise the candidate on their rights and responsibilities in accessing and using the resources and facilities available from the School/Faculty and the University. The resources and facilities available to the project and identification of any additional resources needed should be discussed in detail
- discuss with the candidate expectations with regard to the authorship of publications arising from the student's work [the University Guidelines on Authorship must be consulted]
- seek to understand the differing needs of candidates from different backgrounds and to work with such candidates to make arrangements as necessary to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities regardless of cultural background, gender or disability
- identify whether the candidate requires any further education and training to ensure timely completion
- consider, and if appropriate recommend, requests to change various aspects of candidature (e.g. topic change, upgrades, etc.)

3.e. During Candidature:

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- require written work from the candidate on a pre-arranged and agreed schedule so that progress can be assessed at regular intervals
- monitor carefully the performance of the candidate relative to the standard required for the degree programme, and ensure that inadequate progress or work below the

standard generally expected is brought to the candidate's attention. The supervisors should help with developing solutions to problems as they are identified

- use the regular reporting procedures established by the University as the minimum means by which any difficulties and problems in performance discussed with the candidate during the year are noted. Supervisors should document the action taken or advice given
- provide constructive, detailed and timely feedback on the content and drafts of the thesis, and as the thesis is being prepared ensure it does not exceed the upper limits for the length of postgraduate research theses
- encourage the candidate (particularly if candidature is part-time or remote) to play a full and active role in the intellectual life of the Faculty and University.
- facilitate meetings of the candidate with other researchers in the relevant field, attendance at conferences as appropriate (within the limits of resources available to the School), and provide advice on the preparation of work for publication or other appropriate forms of dissemination
- assist candidates to develop research capabilities, knowledge of the field, and skills more broadly valuable in employment (e.g. writing and editing, problem solving, time management, use of software tools, etc.)
- assist the candidate to publish during candidature, including meeting the requirement to have one output accepted for publication prior to submission of the thesis in the case of doctoral candidates
- fulfill other University determined obligations with respect to supervision
- refer unresolved problems to the Head of School in the first instance.
- initiate proceedings to terminate candidature only after all reasonable attempts to resolve problems have failed

3.f. End of Candidature:

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- at the time of submission, certify that the thesis is properly presented and is prima facie worthy of examination. Where such a certification cannot be given, advise the candidate accordingly
- following consultation with members of the supervisory team the Principal Supervisor should recommend to the Head of School the names and credentials of suitable examiners
- where necessary, advise the candidate on responding to the examiners' recommendations
- support the career aspirations of the candidate after completion of the thesis, through, for example, provision of references, and advice on publications.

3.g. General:

It is the responsibility of the supervisors to:

- be familiar with University policies and procedures relating to postgraduate research programmes and supervision of those programmes
- be aware of problem solving mechanisms and available support services should problems arise during candidature and ensure that the Head of School and Associate Dean Research are kept informed as necessary

- encourage collegial, supportive relationships that respect the conventional constraints of professional practice governing relations between candidate and a supervisor. Refer also to the Relationship between staff and students and between members of staff.
- advise the candidate about any plans a supervisor may have for extended leave during the candidature and consult with the candidate and Head of School and/or Associate Dean Research about proposed arrangements for supervision during this leave.

3.h. Shared Responsibilities of the Supervisory Panel

The Principal Supervisor is primarily responsible for supervising the work done by coordinating the supervisory panel, providing the academic leadership within the supervisory panel, and providing the principal guidance and information on the candidate's research topic and its development. The Principal Supervisor has the primary responsibility for the conduct of the candidature, monitoring the progress of the candidate and reporting the aggregated views of the supervisory panel. The Principal Supervisor also carries the responsibility of coordinating communication between the members of the supervisory panel and the candidate, and for resolving any problems that may result from associate supervisors providing the candidate with contradictory advice. The Principal Supervisor is responsible for the administrative aspects of the candidature.

Secondary Supervisors are appointed to assist in the supervision of the candidature. The Secondary Supervisors will have specific expertise related to the candidate's research and will advise the candidate as appropriate on research related matters. Any Secondary Supervisors should be involved as soon as practicable in the development of the candidate's research plan and should maintain a level of communication with the candidate and the principal supervisor to allow adequate supervision whenever necessary. A Secondary Supervisor [who is a member of the University] will act as a Principal Supervisor where the Principal Supervisor cannot or will not fulfil their role, for example during absences of the Principal Supervisor.

3.i. Responsibilities of the Candidate:

Quality supervision arises from the positive interaction between supervisors and candidate. Within this interaction it is possible to identify a number of responsibilities of the candidate. These responsibilities vary depending on the stage of candidature, although in practice these discrete stages may overlap.

i. Before Candidature

It is the responsibility of the applicant to:

- play an informed part in the process of the selection and appointment of the supervisors. Where possible, intending applicants are encouraged to consult with staff members who may be able to supervise the proposed research topic, before submitting an application. Preliminary discussions of this nature often assist

applicants to focus their intended research topic and achieve a match with the academic expertise of a potential supervisor.

ii. Early in Candidature

It is the responsibility of the candidate to:

- become familiar with, and abide by, University policies and procedures pertaining to the research programme, and postgraduate research studies in general
- complete a postgraduate research Induction Programme by attending a face to face or, where appropriate, an online orientation
- clarify with the supervisors mutual expectations concerning supervision and the responsibilities of supervisors
- discuss with the supervisors the type of guidance and comment that would be most helpful and establish, and adhere to agreed methods of working together
- discuss and maintain a mutually agreed schedule of meetings to ensure regular contact
- develop, plan, and structure a realistic program of study and research with the assistance and advice of the supervisors. This will include selection of an appropriate topic that will lead to the timely submission of a quality thesis for examination
- with the assistance of the supervisors, obtain ethical clearance if required, and notify the supervisors of any intellectual property issues; negotiate with the supervisors appropriate recognition of contribution to any joint publications that may arise during and after the research project
- assist the supervisors and the University to identify distinctive needs including needs related to cultural difference, gender, disabilities and other equity backgrounds and to recommend appropriate support measures.

iii. During Candidature:

- It is the responsibility of the candidate to:
- diligently proceed with the research as agreed between the candidate and the supervisors with a view to completing the thesis within the specified time
- maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisors including, in particular, the presentation of any required written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage
- submit timely and accurate progress reports and complete the requirements for the early candidature and mid candidature milestones in association with the supervisors, at periods specified by the University via Postgraduate Research Portal
- adopt at all times safe working practices relevant to the field of research and adhere to the ethical practices appropriate to the discipline and more generally applicable
- utilise the resources, facilities and opportunities provided by the University to facilitate progress in the research
- take advantage of opportunities to become part of the intellectual community by attending and participating in seminars, meetings, electronic conferencing, and conferences at the local, regional, national or international level as appropriate

- take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties and share the responsibility for seeking solutions including informing the supervisors of any personal or other difficulties that have slowed or may slow progress
- be aware of the mechanisms that exist for resolving supervisor-candidate difficulties. When necessary, candidates have a responsibility to take the initiative to seek appropriate alternative supervision and to apply for a change of supervisor
- be aware of the University grievance procedures, and if possible seek negotiated solutions to any problems before recourse to those procedures
- refrain from embarking on any significant variation to the research topic unless agreed with the Principal Supervisor and in consultation with the supervisory panel and, if necessary, approved by the FRC
- establish and maintain, if a part-time or remote candidate, suitable means of regular contact with the supervisors.

iv. **End of Candidature**

It is the responsibility of the candidate to:

- ensure sufficient time is allocated for writing up the thesis and be aware of the requirements for content, style and standard of presentation
- accept responsibility for producing the final copies of the thesis, and ensuring that it accords with University requirements
- ensure that the thesis adheres to the principles of research integrity concerning plagiarism and research ethics as stipulated in the relevant University policies
- declare that the work reported in the thesis is the candidate's own, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis, and that any assistance in writing the thesis is appropriately acknowledged
- with assistance from the supervisor, respond appropriately to examiners' reports and recommendations within the specified timeframe.

4 **Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge the following universities who have provided input or example into this document:

- Australian National University
- Deakin University
- Griffith University
- Monash University
- University of Melbourne
- University of New South Wales
- University of Western Australia

5 **Related documents** This document should be read in conjunction with the Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy.