

# Higher Degrees by Research Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) Victoria University (VU) offers a number of Higher Degrees by Research, or Research Degrees. The University has principles and procedures that provide the framework for the admission, enrolment, progression, support and examination of candidates in Research Degrees at VU to ensure that Research Degrees are delivered fairly, transparently and efficiently.

## Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This policy applies to all students enrolled in Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) programs.

## Section 3 - Definitions

(3) Higher Degree by Research (HDR)

## Section 4 - Policy Statement

(4) Victoria University is committed to developing a vibrant and flourishing research culture. One of the mechanisms to achieve this is by offering Research Degrees.

(5) A Research Degree, or Higher Degree by Research, is a postgraduate course in which the major part of the assessment must be in the form of reporting the outcomes of a research project/s conducted as the research component of the degree. The Research Degree may also include a Coursework Component, which is one or more accredited units of study designed to address an area(s) of content and/or skill development within the HDR program.

(6) (Information on the Research component and any Coursework Component is provided in the Higher Degree by Research Procedures .)

### Admission to a Research Degree

(7) Admission refers to:

- a. the provisional acceptance and enrolment in the pre-candidature phase of a Research Degree (see clause (22));
- b. the official acceptance into a Research Degree resulting from the:
  - i. conversion of one Research Degree to another (see clauses (26) and (27));
  - ii. granting of advanced Candidature (see clauses (26) and (27) of this policy and the relevant procedures for information on Advanced Candidature);
  - iii. reinstatement of Candidature (see clauses (22) and (21)).

### Eligibility for Admission

(8) Admission to a Research Degree occurs when an applicant:

- a. meets minimum academic entry requirements and demonstrates experience and capacity to meet the demands of the course; or
- b. can demonstrate exceptional academic ability and extensive experience in Research in the proposed field.

(9) Minimum academic requirements and the method used to determine capacity and exceptional ability to meet the demands of the course are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

### **Admission to a Research Degree is Dependent on University Capacity**

(10) Admission to a research degree is subject to the University having the resources and capacity (including, but not limited to, supervisors and infrastructure) to support the proposed program of Research.

## **Enrolment**

### **Research Degree Students must be Enrolled for the Duration of the Research Degree**

(11) Except where Clause (16) applies, a student admitted to a Research Degree must enrol and maintain his/her enrolment in the Research Degree for the duration of the Research Degree.

(12) A student's enrolment will 'Lapse' if they do not maintain their enrolment during the course of the Research Degree.

(13) To be admitted and enrol, a student must complete the requirements and processes outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

### **Failure to maintain Enrolment**

(14) If at any time prior to Thesis submission a student fails to maintain their enrolment, they will automatically be discontinued from the degree in which they had been previously enrolled.

### **Time Fraction of Enrolment**

(15) The time fraction of enrolment (that is, full time or part time) can be varied to cater for changing circumstances provided that this does not conflict with eligibility requirements for residence in Australia, receipt of living stipend scholarship or availability of Research Training Scheme (RTS) places. The process to request changes is outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

### **Enrolment not required during Thesis Examination**

(16) Students do not need to maintain their enrolment whilst their Thesis is being examined.

### **Discontinuation of Enrolment**

(17) Discontinuation refers to the termination of a student's enrolment in a Research Degree by the University. The University may discontinue a student's enrolment because of failure to enrol or maintain enrolment. Unsatisfactory progress and/or Misconduct, including academic or research misconduct (see [Student Misconduct Regulation](#) and [Research Integrity - Guide to the Management of Potential Breaches of the Australian Code Procedure](#) ).

### **Withdrawal of Enrolment by the Student**

(18) Withdrawal refers to a situation where a student enrolled in a Research Degree elects to completely terminate his/her enrolment in a Research Degree. To withdraw, the student must complete the requirements and processes outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **Intermission from Enrolment**

(19) Intermission refers to cases where students suspend their enrolment in Research Degree for a period of time. An enrolled student is entitled to apply for an Intermission for a period or periods up to 12 months equivalent full time. Additional periods of intermission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

(20) Where students take an intermission, the period of intermission is not counted in their Research Degree duration. In seeking Intermission, the student must fulfil and follow the relevant requirements and provisions outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **Reinstatement of Enrolment**

(21) Students who have:

- a. withdrawn from their degree;
- b. entered into a period of Intermission; or
- c. allowed their enrolment to Lapsed.

(22) may apply to have their enrolment reinstated. The relevant process and requirements are detailed in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **The Phases of Higher Degrees by Research: Pre-Candidature and Candidature**

(23) The structure of a Research Degree is marked by two phases, known as "Pre-candidature" and "Candidature". Information on Pre-Candidature and Candidature is available in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **Course Duration**

### **Standard Course Duration**

(24) The standard course duration of a Research Degree will depend on the Research Degree in which the student is enrolled. Information on Standard Course Duration for the various Research Degrees is in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

### **Extensions beyond Standard Course Duration**

(25) Once students reach the Standard Course Duration for their Research Degree, a further application will need to be submitted requesting additional time to complete their Thesis.

Details on requirements and processes for seeking extensions are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **Conversion of Degrees**

(26) Conversion of a Research Degree refers to changing enrolment from a:

- a. Masters by Research Degree to a Doctoral Degree
- b. Doctoral Degree to a Masters by Research Degree
- c. PhD to Professional Doctorate
- d. Professional Doctoral to a PhD

(27) Conversion of a Research Degree can be initiated by the student or directed by the University. The process for conversion and other provisions relating to conversion are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **The Thesis**

### **What is a Thesis?**

(28) A Thesis is a submission that documents the context, process and outcomes of a candidate's Research presented in a format accepted for submission for examination. It should be interpreted in the disciplinary context and may vary according to discipline and/or field of study.

(29) Information on the Thesis formats and the requirements associated with each type of Research Degree are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

### **Thesis Examination**

(30) Students are required to submit their Thesis for examination. In all cases, examination of the Thesis will be undertaken by at least two (2) examiners external to the University. The provisions, process and requirements for examination are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures.

### **Progress**

(31) Research Degree students will have their Progress regularly monitored. The Higher Degree by Research Procedures outline the mechanisms, requirements and other information regarding Progress.

### **Unsatisfactory Progress**

#### **Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings**

(32) Students found to have met the requirements for Unsatisfactory Progress will be subject to Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings. The process and requirements for Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings are specified in the Higher Degree by Research Procedures.

#### **Review of Unsatisfactory Progress Decisions**

(33) Student can request an appeal or review of an Unsatisfactory Progress decision. The grounds for such a review and the process to be followed are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures.

### **Supervision**

(34) Supervision refers to the process of mentoring and guiding the academic and professional development of a Higher Degree by Research student by a registered Research supervisor(s). Student supervision will operate in accordance with relevant University policies relating to the supervision of Research Degree students.

### **Research and Professional Development**

(35) Students undertaking a Research Degree will be provided with academic and professional development opportunities and support by the University to facilitate their research training program and the dissemination of their research findings. The Higher Degree by Research Procedures outlines the researcher development and support available.

### **Infrastructure and Facilities**

(36) The University will provide HDR Students with research and other infrastructure, facilities and other general resources and support in accordance with national standards for their approved program of research. The standards and other requirements are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures.

## **Classification and Conferral of Research Degrees**

(37) The processes and requirements associated with Classification and Conferral are outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Procedures .

## **Section 5 - Procedures**

(38) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 1 Admissions](#)

(39) [HDR Procedure 2 Enrolments](#)

(40) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 3 Pre-Candidature and Candidature](#)

(41) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#)

(42) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 5 Researcher Development and Support](#)

(43) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 6 Scholarships](#)

(44) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 7 Supervision](#)

(45) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 8 Thesis Requirements](#)

(46) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 9 Submission, Examination and Classification](#)

## **Section 6 - Guidelines**

(47) [VU Graduate Research Training and Supervision Quality and Standards Framework](#)

## Status and Details

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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Higher Degree by Research (HDR)"** - A Higher Degree by Research (HDR) is a postgraduate award at Master or Doctoral level at AQF 9 or 10 respectively, of which two thirds or more is research and research training. The major part of assessment of these courses must be in the form of reporting the outcomes of a research project/s conducted as the research component of the degree. A HDR may also include a coursework component, which is one or more accredited units of study designed to address and area(s) of content and/or skill development within the HDR program.