Higher Degrees by Research Enrolments Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) enrolment, re-enrolment, changes to enrolment, auditing of additional units of study and the process for discontinuation of candidature.

Section 2 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(2) HESF: Standard 1.1 Admissions; 4.2 Research Training; 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students.

(3) ESOS Act: Part 3 Division 2; Part 5 Division 2. National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 – Standard 3, 8 and Standard 9.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This Procedure applies to domestic and international students, candidates and University staff administering this Procedure.

Section 4 - Definitions

(5) Timely duration - The normal period of time, deemed by the Commonwealth, for the degree level to be completed (subject to degree type).

(6) Leave of Absence – Is a period within the normal period deemed by the Commonwealth for the degree level to be completed which does not count towards enrolment. Periods of Leave of Absence can normally be granted for up to 12 months irrespective of mode of study. Leave of Absence is only available within the normal period of time, deemed by the Commonwealth, for the degree level to be completed.

(7) Additional Leave of Absence - In exceptional cases, Leave of Absence beyond 12 months may be granted within the timely duration of the enrolled degree.

Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(8) Higher Degrees by Research Policy

Section 6 - Procedures

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Organise enrolment schedule for new students. Check student's original documentation and send enrolment form to Enrolments & Student Financials for processing. Advise re-enrolling candidates of the census dates each year. Approve and process applications for Leave of Absence and forward to Enrolments & Student Financials for processing on the university database. Approve and process applications for course discontinuation and forward to Enrolments & Student Financials for processing on the university database. If an international candidate, include VU Global in correspondence. Provide advice regarding change in mode of study for non-stipend and stipend scholarship holders and where applicable, approve a change of study mode, process the application and cease stipend payments via payroll. Approve applications for Leave of Absence and cease stipend payments via payroll for the nominated period.
Research Institutes	Approve applications for Leave of Absence for candidates who have yet to have Confirmation of Candidature approved by the Research Institute. Approve applications for additional Leave of Absence. Approve the transfer of the candidate from one Institute to another Institute within VU Research.

Part B - HDR Enrolment: General

(9) This Procedure is to be read in conjunction with the University's Enrolments Policy.

(10) The processes of enrolment, Leave of Absence and discontinuation for HDR candidates are outlined in these Procedures, in accordance with the Higher Degrees by Research Policy, and the Enrolments Policy.

(11) A graduate research student must enrol initially in the accepted course and graduate research candidates must maintain an enrolled status to participate in the course.

(12) The process and timeline for enrolment will vary according to the enrolment category. Candidates may be enrolled in one of the following categories:

a. Research Training Program (RTP fee offset);
b. Full-fee paying (local or international); or
c. Fee-Scholarship (full or partial, local or international).

(13) Full-time enrolment equates to a commitment of 35-40 hours per week and part-time enrolment equates to a commitment of 17.5-20 hours per week. The University would normally expect full-time HDR candidates to have no other study commitments. Outside work and/or study commitments should not hinder the candidate's progression towards timely duration (refer to Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure) and will need to include the total number of hours linked to the activity, such as preparation time in the case of tuition/teaching, and should not exceed 15 hours per week in total.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

(14) Candidates cannot be simultaneously enrolled in two research degrees either at Victoria University (VU) or another Australian Institution.

(15) Concurrent enrolment in two or more standalone courses is only permissible where the Dean, Graduate Research (or nominee) is satisfied that the student/candidate is not disadvantaged and has a realistic opportunity to succeed in their studies in all courses. Approval is subject to:

a. the student/candidate submitting a written request to the Dean, Graduate Research (or nominee) outlining the benefit of enrolling concurrently;
b. principal supervisor must provide a letter of support. In the event progress is not being made in the research degree, the principal supervisor must address this matter with the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) and
c. all relevant external requirements and legislation and conditional on the student maintaining satisfactory academic progress in both courses and may be revoked where the student/candidate cannot continue to meet this requirement. Concurrent study in more than one course may impact a Higher Education student's learning entitlements and HELP loan borrowing limit.

(16) University refund policies apply to onshore and offshore candidates.

Part C - Initial Enrolment

All students

(17) Initial enrolment is organised by the University.

(18) At the time of enrolment:

a. Domestic applicants must present their letter of offer, evidence of Australian citizenship or Permanent Residency or New Zealand citizenship and certified hard copies of required academic documents.
b. International applicants must bring their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) letter, their passport, the letter of offer and, if a sponsored candidate, also proof of their financial guarantee to VU Global.

(19) Students are provided with a University @ live email account when they enrol. As the University sends its correspondence to students via their University @ live email account, students are expected to access their account regularly and use their account for communication related to their enrolment.

(20) It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any changes to their personal details are updated through submission of a Personal Details Amendment form or through MyVU. Stipend scholarship holders must also inform the Manager, Scholarships, VU Research of any changes to their personal details.

(21) Students will be expected to attend an Orientation session held by GRS in the research period in which they initially commence their research degree.

Part D - Offshore Enrolment

Commencing Students

(22) The following conditions must be met for students who have been granted permission to enrol offshore:

a. the student must declare on the Apply for graduate research the principal location at which research studies will be undertaken;
b. candidature is subject to the satisfaction of course progression requirements including:

i. completion of required coursework where applicable;
ii. candidature confirmation; and
iii. ongoing progress review via the candidature milestones;

c. the Principal Supervisor must be a member of the University or has the relevant adjunct appointment or is otherwise formally contracted and accountable to the University for supervisor duties (Higher Degree by Research Supervision - Supervisor Registration and Professional Development Procedure);
d. a local Associate Supervisor should be appointed;
e. a supervision schedule (expectation: minimum monthly online platform meetings, weekly email exchange, annual face-to-face meetings) must be approved by the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee at the time of enrolment, or at the time the candidate requests to become an offshore candidate. This should be detailed in the Supervisor Agreement.

(23) Students will be notified in advance of applicable fees.

(24) The offshore initial enrolment process follows the process outlined in Part C – Initial Enrolment of this Procedure.

Continuing Candidates

(25) VU will normally only consider applications for offshore enrolment, or a change of status from onshore to offshore, in exceptional circumstances. Those circumstances are:

a. where the candidate is part of a larger university-endorsed arrangement for a research degree course to be delivered offshore and where there is clear evidence of a suitable academic environment through online and blended course delivery and/or in conjunction with a host institution;
b. compassionate or compelling circumstances that prevent or make it difficult for the candidate to study or continue to study in Melbourne.

(26) A student visa may be required for off-shore international applicants who will be on-shore for periods of more than three months during candidature, Enrolments and Student Financials will need to be involved in the enrolment process.

Part E - Continuing Enrolment and Reinstatement of Candidature

Continuing enrolment

(27) Once the candidate has completed the initial enrolment (refer to clauses 17-21), they will have a continuous enrolment for the duration of their degree unless:

a. The candidate discontinues the degree;
b. University discontinuation (refer to Part I – Discontinuation);
c. The candidate is on an approved leave of absence or additional leave of absence;
d. Enrolment lapses due to exceeding timely duration and failing to apply for a late submission (refer to Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure); or
e. The candidate submits thesis for examination (refer to clause 29).

(28) Supervision and resources can only be provided whilst a candidate is enrolled.

(29) Once a candidate has submitted their thesis for examination they are no longer enrolled as the thesis is under examination. The exception is when a candidate must re-enrol for a major re-write of their thesis (see Higher Degrees by Research Submission, Examination and Classification Procedure). All candidates remain a student of the University

until their thesis is classified.

Reinstatement of Candidature

(30) A candidate must have a continuous enrolment for the duration of their candidature, unless clause 27 a-e has been executed. Failure to re-enrol by census dates will result in candidature lapsing. If the candidate wishes to continue in the degree, they will be required to apply for reinstatement of candidature.

(31) When a candidate's enrolment has lapsed or discontinued within three years of their last enrolment, providing candidature has been approved, a person may apply to be reinstated to the degree in which they were enrolled. Normally, this is for the purpose of continuing their previous project, or a revised version of their previous project. The University will deem if the applicant's research is still viable, current place restrictions, availability of supervision and resources. If more than three years has lapsed, or a different research project is being proposed, a new application must be submitted (see Higher Degrees by Research Admissions Procedure).

(32) Only in exceptional circumstances will reinstatement be considered for a candidate whose enrolment has been discontinued by the University through Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings.

(33) The application for all candidates who seek to have their candidature reinstated must be made on the Application for Reinstatement of Candidature form.

(34) If candidature is reinstated and the candidate had consumed the timely duration for the degree, the applicant will incur tuition fees at the yearly rate of the enrolled unit of study fee - refer to Research Student Fees and Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure.

(35) The decision about reinstatement of candidature will be made by the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee taking into consideration the nature of the circumstances that led to the cessation or suspension of candidature and the strength of the case made for why the applicant should be permitted to recommence their candidature, including the likelihood of this leading to a successful outcome and reference to clause (11) c-g of the Higher Degrees by Research Admissions Procedure. The Dean Graduate Research may also be consulted on applications for reinstatement of candidature.

Part F - Changes to Enrolment

Change from Onshore to Offshore

(36) Candidates seeking to transfer their enrolment status from onshore to offshore must seek approval from GRS and attach supporting documentation from their Principal Supervisor. Such candidates must adhere to all conditions for offshore enrolment as outlined in Part D – Offshore Enrolment - Continuing Candidates. Failure to do so may result in the University discontinuing their enrolment.

Change in Mode of Study

(37) The approval for candidates considering a change of their mode of study from full-time to part-time enrolment or vice versa will depend on several factors, including:

a. whether the candidate is in receipt of a stipend scholarship;
b. availability of places; and
c. supervisor load.

(38) Any candidate who is considering a change in their mode of study must inform their Principal Supervisor and notify GRS of their intended change of study mode. If the candidate is a stipend scholarship holder, they must inform the Manager, Scholarships of their intended change, typically from full-time to part-time, will normally result in the

cessation of their stipend.

(39) International candidates are not permitted to enrol part-time except under exceptional circumstances. International candidates must consult with Enrolments and Student Financials as well as GRS if they need to make any change to their enrolment.

Change of Enrolment Category

(40) All candidates initially enrol in one of the three categories outlined in clauses 13 (a)-(c). However, as candidature progresses, a candidate may request a change to their enrolment category (for example, a local fee-paying candidate may request to be considered for an RTP fee offset place).

(41) The University reserves the right to decline applications pertaining to a change of enrolment category.

Change between Research Institutes

(42) Candidates may change supervisors under conditions outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy and Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Supervisor Registration and Professional Development Procedure and a change is assessed for compliance with specific requirements under any Australian law, for example Sanctions Compliance or Defence Export Controls Compliance.

(43) Where this occurs, and the new Principal Supervisor is employed in the other Research Institute, the candidate's enrolment will be transferred to their new Research Institute.

Part G - Audit a Single Unit of Study

(44) A candidate may audit a single unit of study or part thereof to gain further knowledge to assist with their research (that is not formally part of their higher degree by research). The candidate must consult with their supervisor before seeking to audit a unit.

(45) Arrangements for a candidate to audit a unit of study are to be negotiated between the candidate's supervisor and the relevant unit coordinator.

(46) The candidate may participate in classes, however will not be required to undertake the assessment. This participation will not appear on the academic transcript.

(47) A candidate may be required to audit one or more units of study as a condition of enrolment. This will normally be indicated in their offer letter or requested by their supervisor/s.

Part H - Leave of Absence, Additional Leave of Absence and Annual Leave

(48) Leave of Absence from a higher research degree is only available within the limits of the timely duration of the relevant degree:

a. Master of Research Practice (1 year)
b. Master of Research (1.5 years)
c. Master of Applied Research (2 years)
d. Doctor of Philosophy (4 years)
e. Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated) (4 years)

(49) A candidate on Leave of Absence has no entitlement to access supervision or training and support programs, and

must not undertake any data collection that is subject to the approval and oversight of one of the University's ethics committees during such a period. However, candidates will still have access to University systems during periods of approved Leave of Absence.

(50) Applications for Leave of Absence prior to Confirmation of Candidature will only be considered in exceptional and/or extenuating circumstances and must be approved by the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee. Pre-candidature applicants requiring extended Leave of Absence may be advised to consider discontinuing their studies and reapplying when they can return to study.

(51) Domestic candidates may apply for Leave of Absence for up to 12 months for any reason, such as illness, family difficulties or financial hardship. Candidates must complete and submit an Application for Leave of Absence to gradresearch@vu.edu.au prior to the commencement of their Leave of Absence.

(52) International candidates have visa restrictions which limit their ability to take leave whilst still residing in Australia. Leave of Absence is normally only approved in compassionate or compelling circumstances and candidates should refer to Take Leave of Absence webpage. Any international candidate who requires Leave of Absence must seek approval from Enrolments and Student Financials, in line with the ESOS legislative framework, before an Application for Leave of Absence can be processed.

(53) Stipend scholarship recipients must contact researchscholarships@vu.edu.au of their Leave of Absence application at least two weeks prior to its commencement. Failure to do so may form a breach of the conditions of their award and may give rise to the cessation of their award.

(54) Candidates who require leave of absence beyond 12 months must consider one of two options:

a. Additional Leave of Absence (see Clause 55-58);
b. Discontinuing with a view to applying for Reinstatement of candidature (see clauses 30-35) if and when their circumstances change.

(55) Application for Additional Leave of Absence must be approved by the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee. Additional Leave of Absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, such as ongoing medical condition/s, carer responsibilities, bereavement, etc and must be supported by medical certificates and/or other supporting documentation (such as a letter from a medical practitioner, counsellor).

(56) Additional Leave of Absence can be applied for in blocks of six months in any one application, provided that the supporting evidence supplied is judged to justify the granting of additional leave (clause 55). No more than a total of 12 months additional Leave of Absence will be granted.

(57) Additional Leave of Absence is only available within the limits of the timely duration of the relevant degree:

a. Master of Research Practice (1 year)
b. Master of Research (1.5 years)
c. Master of Applied Research (2 years)
d. Doctor of Philosophy (4 years)
e. Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated) (4 years)

(58) A candidate seeking Additional Leave of Absence beyond 12 months will need to adhere to clause (54b).

(59) Candidates are entitled to 20 days annual leave per calendar year and normally this entitlement is after 11 months of elapsed candidature. This leave is to be agreed upon between the candidate and principal supervisor. Candidature, or scholarship stipends, do not cease during this period of leave. Annual Leave is not accrued from year to year.

(60) Candidature will automatically resume when a candidate's leave of absence or additional leave of absence has expired.

Part I - Discontinuation

Candidate-initiated Discontinuation

(61) A candidate may discontinue their course at any stage and for any reason prior to thesis submission by completing and submitting the Course Discontinuation Form.

(62) A candidate who has achieved Confirmation of Candidature and discontinues from their course may in the future reapply to be reinstated into their course (see Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure). Normally, a discontinued candidate would have no more than three years in which to apply for reinstatement. Reinstatement is not granted automatically and will depend on the reasons for discontinuation, whether the University deems that their research is still viable, current place restrictions, availability of supervision and resources. The Application for Reinstatement of Candidature is to be submitted to gradresearch@vu.edu.au and this will be forwarded to the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute or nominee for an outcome.

(63) Applicants who discontinue before achieving Candidature, or who wish to be admitted to a different research degree, must apply for admission to the course they wish to pursue through the Admission Process (see Higher Degrees by Research Admissions Procedure). If they are accepted into the higher degree by research, and if it is less than three years since when they were enrolled in the degree, their expected due date for completion will be determined considering the consumed load of their initial enrolment.

University-initiated Discontinuation

(64) GRS may also discontinue enrolment/candidature in certain circumstances such as:

a. failure to notify of a change to offshore enrolment status;
b. failure to voluntarily discontinue or transfer to alternative study options where the candidate:
    i. has not met the requirements to proceed to the research component of a research degree;
    ii. has not met Confirmation of Candidature after the second attempt;
    iii. has been advised that the Unsatisfactory Progress Panel has reviewed their case and recommended discontinuation of enrolment/candidature.
c. where the candidate has been nominated for Unsatisfactory Progress and has not requested a hearing;
d. the outcome of a formal disciplinary process.

(65) In the unusual circumstance that VU Research does not have the capacity to provide supervision as outlined in the Higher Degrees by Research Supervision Procedure the Dean, Graduate Research will advise the candidate in writing, requesting that the candidate discontinues from their research degree.

(66) VU Research will provide advice to the candidate to assist them in locating another university in which to undertake their postgraduate research.

(67) If the candidate does not voluntarily discontinue their enrolment then VU may initiate a cancellation of the course enrolment in accordance to Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

(68) International candidates who have been asked to discontinue their enrolment are required to liaise with Enrolments and Student Financials so that notification of appropriate authorities can be made in relation to their student visa. International candidates will be given 20 days' notice of any discontinuation to be effected under any of these circumstances in relation to clause (64).

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	9th August 2023
Review Date	9th August 2026
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	2nd August 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Accountable Officer	Andrew Hill Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact andy.hill@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	John Price Dean, Graduate Research +61 3 9919 2046
Enquiries Contact	Elizabeth Smith Manager, Candidature +61 3 9919 4228

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.