Higher Degrees by Research Pre-Candidature and Candidature Procedure

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines standard duration, timely duration, confirmation of candidature and milestones, extensions, advanced candidature, Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) required coursework, progression from pre-candidature to candidature, changes to and reinstatement of candidature.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to domestic and international candidates and University staff administering this Procedure.

Section 3 - Policy/Regulation

(3) Higher Degrees by Research Policy.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Inform candidates of the required coursework units at the time of enrolment. Coordinate the candidature milestone presentations to monitor progress. Identify candidates approaching timely duration and provide advice on the appropriate course of action. Identify candidates who have exceeded timely duration by more than one semester and notify Student Financials to issue a Statement of Account for payment of tuition fees. Notify Enrolments and Student Financials of international candidates who have been identified. Upon the Research Institute approval, process any changes to course type, course level and reinstatement of candidature.
Research Institutes	Provide an outcome for the candidate of the candidature milestone presentations. Provide an outcome for the candidate for any changes to course type, course level and reinstatement of candidature.
Enrolments & Student Financials	Issue a Statement of Account to candidates who have been deemed to incur post-timely duration fees.

Part B - Stages of Candidature in Higher Degrees by Research

Pre-Candidature and Candidature

(4) All successful applicants in a HDR at Victoria University (VU) are initially enrolled on a provisional basis in their HDR course, known as the Pre-Candidature phase of enrolment.

(5) During the Pre-Candidature phase, candidates complete any required coursework (where applicable), under the guidance of their Principal Supervisor, undertake initial research towards their thesis project, and prepare for candidature confirmation.

(6) A candidate's enrolment in their HDR degree is considered confirmed when their research proposal receives final approval via the Confirmation of Candidature process.

(7) Once endorsed by the Chair-Review Panel and approved by the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee, candidature is deemed to have commenced from the date of initial enrolment.

Timely Duration of Higher Degrees by Research

Master Degrees

(8) As stipulated in the Australian Qualifications Framework, candidates enrolled in HDR at the masters level typically have between one to two years equivalent full-time (EFT) enrolment in which to complete their degree.

(9) The timely duration for the following degrees are:

a. Master of Applied Research - 2.0 years
b. Master of Research - 1.5 years

Doctoral Degrees

(10) Doctoral candidates should normally complete their degree in a timely manner of four years.

Scholarship Recipients

(11) Candidates in receipt of a HDR scholarship must refer to the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure regarding the duration of this award in relation to their enrolled degree.

Submission of thesis for examination prior to Timely Duration

Doctoral Degrees

(12) A doctoral candidate may submit their thesis 12 months EFT or more before their timely duration expires by requesting approval from the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee. The submitted documentation as per Part F - Submission of Theses for Examination, Higher Degrees by Research Submission, Examination and Classification Procedure, in addition to the detailed letter from the Principal Supervisor indicating the reasons for early submission, must be submitted to researchexaminations@vu.edu.au.

(13) GRS coordinate that the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee will be provided with the required documentation for review.

(14) The relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee may convene a Review Panel to assist with reviewing and approving an application.

(15) The candidate will be advised of the outcome via @live.vu.edu.au, copied to the principal supervisor. If the application is approved, the thesis will be sent for examination subject to examiners being approved.

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Late Submissions – Post-Timely Duration and Fees

All Research Degrees

(16) Where a candidate expects to exceed the timely duration for their degree, an application for Late Submission must be lodged with the GRS two months prior to timely duration - see Table 1. The application must provide strong justification for late submission beyond timely duration and must detail the strategies to ensure the thesis is submitted by the requested late submission date. A late submission date should normally be no later than six months post-timely duration of their degree.

Table 1 – Timely duration of degrees

Master of Research	1.5 years (EFT)
Master of Applied Research	2 years (EFT)
Doctoral Degrees	4 years (EFT)

(17) Late Submission requests are reviewed and determined by the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee.

(18) The Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee may:

a. approve the application; or,
b. recommend Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings be invoked in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

(19) Candidates who have an application for late submission approved by the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee may incur tuition fees for the period in which they are enrolled in the degree - see Table 2.

Table 2 - Domestic and International Fees: Post Timely Duration

Degree Type	Fee Category	Fee Liabilities – Initial Six Month Enrolment	Fee Liabilities – Additional Six Month Enrolment Period
Doctoral Degree (4 years EFT)	RTP Fee Offset Domestic International	Research Exempt Period	Candidate:100%
	International Full Fee or Sponsored	Candidate:100%	Candidate:100%
Master of Applied Research (2 years EFT)	RTP Fee Offset Domestic International	Research Exempt Period	Candidate:100%
	International Full Fee or Sponsored	Candidate:100%	Candidate:100%
Master of Research (1.5 years)	RTP Fee Offset Domestic International	Research Exempt Period	Candidate:100%

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Degree Type	Fee Category	Fee Liabilities – Initial Six Month Enrolment	Fee Liabilities – Additional Six Month Enrolment Period
	International Full Fee or Sponsored	Candidate:100%	Candidate:100%
Master of Research Practice (1 year EFT)	RTP Fee Offset Domestic International	Research Exempt	Candidate:100%
	International Full Fee or Sponsored	Candidate:100%	Candidate:100%

(20) A candidate will incur the post timely duration tuition fee at the approved unit of study fee schedule for the unit of study in which they are enrolled.

(21) Student Financials will issue the candidate with a Statement of Account requesting payment in 10 University working days from the date of the notification.

(22) The Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee may consider sponsoring the post timely duration tuition fee. Grounds for consideration for sponsorship:

a. Substantial or unforeseen circumstances (including but not limited to loss of samples, interruption to qualitative data collection, extenuating medical grounds)
b. Supervisory issues
c. International sponsorship no longer provided
d. Cultural protocols (timeframes and permissions to be observed) for including data collection
e. National disaster in which the HDR candidate is either directly impacted or has community responsibilities consequently.

(23) Candidates seeking to apply for consideration of sponsorship of post timely duration tuition fees must include a statement outlining the ground/s for consideration with their application for late submission - refer to clause (22).

(24) The Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee will review and determine if:

a. Sponsorship approved, including amount or percentage value of sponsorship; or,
b. Sponsorship not approved, including rationale for the outcome.

(25) Approved sponsorship of post timely duration tuition fees will be applied for the candidate’s period of enrolment as per the approved late submission date. If the candidate fails to submit by the approved late submission date then clause (37) will be invoked.

(26) International candidates refer to clause (38) regarding payment of tuition fees.

(27) If a domestic candidate does not pay their post-timely duration fee by the due date or defer the payment via FEE-HELP (if eligible) or apply for a Fee Extension to defer the payment until the census date, their enrolment will be cancelled due to non-payment.

(28) Tuition fees are calculated on a daily rate for the period of enrolment - refer to research student fees for an example of how to calculate daily fee charge.

(29) Candidates who have submitted their thesis for examination and the completed Release of Thesis which has been

approved by the Chair of Examiners, will have their tuition fee recalculated for the period of enrolment and issued with a new statement of account. The candidate may be eligible for a refund - refer to the Fee Adjustments Procedure.

(30) Following University approval of the forthcoming year's research student fees, candidates will be advised of these fees and may refer to Research Student Fees.

(31) If a Late Submission date is granted and the candidate fails to submit by the approved late submission date, the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee will immediately recommend that Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings be invoked for the candidate in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

International Candidates – All Degrees

(32) If an international candidate does not pay the fees by the due date or apply for additional time in which to pay the tuition fee under Exceptional Circumstances Fee Extension, they will be issued a 20 day notice of the University's intention to cancel their enrolment. Once the notice expires, the candidate's enrolment and their electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE) will be cancelled and reported to the Department of Home Affairs.

Part C - Pre-Candidature: Research Degrees with Required Coursework

Progress in Required Coursework Units (non-Thesis Units)

(33) At enrolment in a HDR course, students will be informed of the required coursework unit/s. Students must successfully complete or have Advanced Standing approved for all of the required coursework units to the required level to proceed in their degree.

(34) A student's progress in the required coursework will be monitored by Associate Dean, Graduate Research (or nominee).

(35) Students are required to achieve an average of 70% or more in their coursework units relevant to their higher research degree. Students in the PhD (Integrated) must also achieve 70% or more in their Year One Thesis.

(36) Students who do not achieve an average of 70% are permitted to re-submit the final piece of assessment for the unit(s) that they did not achieve a result of 70%. The final result of the unit will include the result of the original submission or re-submission, whichever is the greater.

(37) On completion of all required coursework and achievement of a minimum of an average of 70% across the required units (and for PhD Integrated candidatures this includes 70% minimum in the Year 1 Thesis), students will continue in their degree (see clauses (51)-(52)).

(38) If after the re-submission(s) of their final piece of assessment a student does not achieve the required minimum average of 70%, the Academic Coordinator will recommend to the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) (or nominee) that Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings should be invoked in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

Progress Required in the Year One Thesis – PhD (Integrated)

(39) The Year One Thesis is examined by one of the student's supervisors with all results moderated by the Academic Coordinator or nominee. Students are required to achieve a minimum of 70% and meet the requirements as per clause (41).

(40) If a student does not achieve a minimum of 70% in their Year One Thesis on their first attempt:

a. If the result is between 65% and 69%, students are permitted a revised and resubmit option to submit their thesis for re-assessment. Students will be given 2 weeks in which to respond to the examiner's comments in a summary table and track changes where relevant. After reassessment, a maximum final grade of 70% is possible.
b. If the result is between 45% and 49%, students are permitted a revised and resubmit option to submit their thesis for re-assessment. Students will be given 2 weeks in which to respond to the examiner's comments in a summary table and track changes where relevant. After reassessment, a maximum final grade of 50% is possible.

(41) After the re-assessment of their Year One Thesis, if a student does not achieve 70% in their Year One Thesis, the Academic Coordinator will contact the student to discuss their progress and advise them of their options:

a. apply for the alternative exit degree; or,
b. course discontinuation

If the student does not accept a proposed option then in accordance with the Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure, Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings will be invoked.

Progression to Year Two of the PhD (Integrated)

(42) Once students have completed the Year 1 hurdle requirement (minimum 70% average across 5 coursework units and minimum 70% in the Year One Thesis), the student will move into Year Two and commence the Confirmation of Candidature process as per Part D in this Procedure. Students will not be permitted to apply retrospectively for the Master of Research Practice (UMRP) award if they continue with their enrolment into Year Two.

Part D - Progression from Pre-Candidature to Candidature

(43) Whilst in Pre-Candidature, candidates participate in required program induction (Masters and PhD Integrated), Orientation (all commencing HDR students), coursework programs, Researcher Integrity modules and work with their supervisors in order to plan their research project and prepare a proposal according to the Confirmation of Candidature Guidelines.

(44) The outline of the planned research project, incorporating resources required and a timeline, will be presented to the Research Institute in which the candidate is enrolled, based on the following timelines and following the successful completion of required coursework units:

Master of Applied Research	Within 6 months (EFT) of initial enrolment
Master of Research	Within 6 months (EFT) of initial enrolment
Doctor of Philosophy	Within 6-9 months (EFT) of initial enrolment
Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated)	Within 15 months (EFT) of initial enrolment

Pre-Candidature Extension

(45) The Pre-Candidature phase may be extended for a specified additional period when one or more of the following unanticipated difficulties have been/are experienced which are impacting current progress:

a. disruption to supervisory support arrangements (e.g. need to change supervisor/s; unanticipated absence of supervisor/s);
b. significant change in focus and direction of proposed project;

c. revision required in the review process leading up to presentation for candidature;
d. difficulties in scheduling of Candidature Confirmation deliberations and/or in convening a suitable confirmation panel;
e. documented personal illness or other serious personal difficulties;
f. other unforeseen disruptions beyond the candidate's control that have directly impacted on their capacity to prepare for Candidature.

(46) A student must apply for an extension to Pre-Candidature by lodging the Application for Extension form two months prior to their expected candidature confirmation date if additional time is required to prepare for confirmation of candidature. GRS will notify the student in writing of the outcome of their application.

Confirmation of Candidature Process

(47) Each candidate will be required to submit an Application for Confirmation of Candidature and associated documentation when they are applying for Confirmation of Candidature. Candidates should refer to the Candidature Milestone Guidelines as well as seek guidance from their supervisor(s) during this period.

(48) The process for Confirmation of Candidature will include careful scrutiny of the following:

a. a detailed research proposal including research gap and aims, literature review, methodology and methods, proposed analysis, ethical considerations, and thesis format;
b. a detailed budget outlining the resources required for the project;
c. the academic merit, feasibility and viability, including consideration of the ethical implications, of the proposed project in relation to the degree for which the candidate is applying to be a candidate;
d. the capacity to ensure that adequate supervision, resources and infrastructure are available to support the proposed project;
e. the capacity of the candidate to undertake the project successfully:
    i. in the format proposed;
    ii. within the time frame stipulated for the degree for which the candidate is applying to be a candidate; and
    iii. with the enrolment time fraction proposed;
f. a candidate must also satisfy the Review Panel that they are able to devote the time necessary for completion of the course in accordance with the time fraction in which they are enrolled.

(49) The Confirmation of Candidature Review Panel may recommend:

a. achieved;
b. pending: Minor;
c. pending: Major; or
d. not achieved.

(50) Candidates who have their Application for Confirmation of Candidature recommended by the Candidature Review Panel as:

a. Pending: Minor; or,
b. Pending: Major

should refer to the Candidature Milestone Guidelines in order to address the requirements within the set timelines noting that candidates who have their Application for Confirmation of Candidature pending: minor or major, may have one further attempt to present for and achieve Confirmation of Candidature.

(51) The Final outcome of the Confirmation of Candidature lies with the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee:

a. achieved; or,
b. not achieved.

Failure to Present for or Achieve Confirmation of Candidature

(52) Candidates who have their Application for Confirmation of Candidature pending: minor or pending: major will have one further opportunity to present for Confirmation of Candidature - refer to Candidature Milestone Guidelines to follow the requirements pertaining to the recommendations.

(53) The Graduate Research School will arrange for candidates who have not presented for Confirmation of Candidature within the timelines specified in Clause (50) to present for Confirmation of Candidature at a date and time designated by their Institute. Failure to present for Confirmation of Candidature will result in Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings invoked in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

(54) Candidates who do not submit the required documentation pertaining to pending: minor or pending: major, within the set timelines (see Candidature Milestone Guidelines) will have Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings invoked in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

(55) Candidates who do not achieve Confirmation of Candidature will have Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings invoked in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

Part E - Milestones: Mid-Candidature Review and Towards Submission

(56) Candidates will be required to present for their Milestone Reviews as required for their enrolled degree to report on their academic progress. Candidates should refer to the Candidature Milestone Guidelines and seek guidance from their supervisor(s).

(57) Doctor of Philosophy candidates must present for their Mid-Candidature Review within the timeframes below:

Doctor of Philosophy candidates	2.0 years (EFT)

(58) Master degrees and Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated) candidates are normally not required to present for Mid-Candidature Review due to the restricted timelines between Confirmation of Candidature and Towards Submission. Candidates enrolled in these degrees can present for the purpose of providing feedback, or to monitor progress and should be initiated by the Principal Supervisor, the candidate or Institute Associate Director (Research Training).

(59) Candidates must present for Towards Submission within the timeframes below:

Master of Applied Research	1.5 years (EFT)
Master of Research	1.25 years (EFT)
All Doctoral Degrees	3.0 years (EFT)

(60) Candidates will be advised of the timeline of their next Candidature Milestone Review following each Milestone.

(61) Extensions may be approved but only in extenuating circumstances by the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee.

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(62) The Mid-Candidature Review will include careful scrutiny that progress since Confirmation remains satisfactory in relation to feasibility and viability of the proposed project, and that the candidate is on track with the progress of their research. The Review Panel will provide a written report and may recommend:

a. achieved;
b. pending: Minor;
c. pending: Major; or,
d. not achieved.

(63) The Towards Submission Review will include careful scrutiny that progress since Confirmation of Candidature and Mid-Candidature Review, as applicable, remains satisfactory and that the candidate is on track to submit a high quality thesis as a timely completion. Furthermore, the candidate is required to indicate the expected date that they will submit for examination. The Review Panel will provide a written report and may recommend:

a. achieved;
b. pending: Minor;
c. pending: Major; or,
d. not achieved.

(64) Candidates who have their Application for Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission recommended by the Review Panel as:

a. pending: Minor; or,
b. pending: Major

should refer to the Candidature Milestone Guidelines in order to address the recommendation requirements within the set timelines.

(65) Final outcome of the Mid-Candidature Review and Towards Submission lies with the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee:

a. achieved; or,
b. not achieved.

(66) Candidates who have not submitted for Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission within the timelines specified by the University will have Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings invoked in accordance to Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

(67) Candidates who do not achieve Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission will have Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings invoked in accordance with Higher Degrees by Research Progress Procedure.

Ongoing Progress

(68) Notwithstanding the role of the University Candidature Milestone Reviews, it is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to monitor the candidate's progress to ensure they are on track for a timely completion. When appropriate, the principal supervisor must notify the Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee if the candidate is not making satisfactory progress in their candidature either at the relevant candidate milestone or outside of this process so the appropriate action can be taken.

(69) Candidates are also advised to raise their own concerns about their progress with their supervisor and if needed the Institute Associate Director (Research Training). Candidates may also wish to contact Student Advocacy.

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Part F - Significant Changes to Candidature

(70) Minor changes to research projects do not require Research Institute approval, but must be discussed and negotiated with the supervisory team.

Significant Change in Research Direction

(71) A significant change in the direction of a research project post-Confirmation of Candidature requires a new research proposal to be submitted to GRS for consideration by the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee and will require an assessment to identify any new or changed legal requirements that may apply (e.g. Sanctions Compliance or Defence Export Controls Compliance). Significant changes include:

a. a major change to the project plan;
b. a major change in resourcing and/or support needs;
c. a change in academic supervision for the new research direction.

(72) The University will consider whether the project remains viable and feasible within the timeframe and to determine whether it is still able to support the project with resourcing and supervision and, where applicable, continue to support the project following any revisions to the sanctions approval.

Conversions Between Course Type and Level

Conversion from a Doctoral Degree to a Master Degree

(73) A conversion is only possible from a Doctoral degree to a Master degree. A candidate may apply for their candidature to be converted from a Doctoral to a Master degree, if they satisfy the requirements of a research degree and under certain other circumstances, such as:

a. the doctoral thesis has not been examined by external examiners;
b. they are unable to continue in the course, but have completed sufficient work to be able to prepare a Master degree thesis submission;
c. a review of progress (such as the Mid-Candidature review or Towards Submission Review or via Unsatisfactory Progress) leads to agreement that the candidate's work is not at a doctoral level, but is considered of sufficient scope and quality to merit submission and examination for a Masters degree.

(74) The application for conversion must be made to the GRS for consideration by the relevant Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee using the Application for Conversion of a Research Degree (contact GRS).

(75) The Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee will assess applications on a case by case basis to determine the appropriate research master degree the candidate may exit with.

(76) If the candidate has been on a scholarship for more than two years EFT, the scholarship will cease immediately on conversion to a Master degree.

Conflict of Roles

(77) No individual may be involved in dual or multiple roles. Where the potential for a conflict of roles exists the following alternate delegations will normally apply:

a. For Institute Associate Director (Research Training) or nominee who is also the Principal Supervisor - The Dean, Graduate Research (or their nominee, normally a senior academic).
b. For the Dean, Graduate Research - Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact or nominee.

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Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS/Alignment

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

(79) 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 8 and Standard 9.

Section 6 - Definitions

(80) Pre-Candidature

(81) Candidature

(82) Timely Duration – The normal period of time, deemed by the Commonwealth, for the degree level to be completed (subject to degree type).

(83) Post-timely Duration Fees – Fees incurred by the candidate who has exceeded the timely duration of their degree (and subject to degree type).

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Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	27th April 2026
Review Date	27th April 2029
Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact
Approval Date	24th April 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Candidature" - Confirmed enrolment of degree; and Period of enrolment in degree including pre-candidature enrolment.

"Pre-Candidature" - A period of enrolment prior to the student achieving confirmation of candidature.