

Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 3 Pre-Candidature and Candidature

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 - Accountability

Accountable/Responsible Officer	Role
Accountable Officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
Responsible Officer	Dean, Graduate Research

Section 3 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS/Alginment

(2) HESF: Standard 1.1 Admission; 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 8 and Standard 9.

Section 4 - Scope

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

Section 5 - Definitions

(5) Pre-Candidature

(6) Candidature

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

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

Section 6 - Policy/Regulation

(9) [Higher Degrees by Research Policy](#).

Section 7 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Office for Researcher Training, Quality and Integrity (ORTQI)	<p>Inform candidates of the required coursework units at the time of enrolment.</p> <p>Coordinate the candidature milestone presentations to monitor progress.</p> <p>Identify candidates approaching maximum duration and provide advice on the appropriate course of action.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Upon the Research Institute approval, process any changes to course type, course level and reinstatement of candidature.</p>
Research Institutes	<p>Provide an outcome for the candidate of the candidature milestone presentations.</p> <p>Provide an outcome for the candidate for any changes to course type, course level and reinstatement of candidature.</p>
Enrolments & Student Financials	<p>Issue a Statement of Account to candidates who have been deemed to incur post=timely duration fees.</p>

Part B - Stages of Candidature in Higher Degrees by Research

Pre-Candidature and Candidature

(10) 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.

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

(12) Within one month from the date of enrolment, the candidate, in consultation with the principal supervisor, must appoint a VU registered associate supervisor/s to the supervisory team (see [Supervision - Supervisor Registration and Development Procedure](#)).

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

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

Timely Duration of Higher Degrees by Research

Master Degrees

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

(16) The timely duration for the following degrees are as follows:

- a. Master of Applied Research - 2.0 years
 - i. Following a Level 7 qualification (Bachelor Degree) in a different discipline.
- b. Master of Research - 1.5 years
 - i. Following a Level 7 qualification (Bachelor Degree) in the same discipline.
 - ii. Following a Level 8 qualification (Bachelor Degree with Honours or Graduate Diploma) in a different discipline.
- c. Master of Research Practice - 1.0 years
 - i. Following a Level 8 qualification (Honours or equivalent) in the same discipline.
- d. Masters by Research (for commencing candidates pre-2019)- 2.0 years
 - i. a three-year bachelors (AQF7) degree with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction for the final year (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale);
 - ii. a four year bachelors degree/Honours (AQF8) degree with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction for the final year (equivalent to above 70 per cent on VU grading scale);
 - iii. a Post-graduate Graduate Diploma (AQF8) in a relevant discipline with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale);
 - iv. a Master by Coursework (AQF9) degree with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale);
 - v. qualified for any other award judged by the University to be of a relevant and appropriate standard and have:
 - produced evidence of professional experience through which he or she has developed applied knowledge of the relevant field of study, and which satisfies the University that he or she has the capacity to undertake study for a masters level research degree; and
 - fulfilled any other conditions relating to prerequisite study which the University may have imposed in respect of admission to the research degree.

Doctoral Degrees

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

Scholarship Recipients

(18) Candidates in receipt of a HDR scholarship must refer to the [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 6 Scholarships](#) regarding the duration of this award in relation to their enrolled degree.

Submission prior to Timely Duration

(19) A candidate may submit their thesis 12 months EFT or more before their timely duration expires (doctoral only) by requesting approval from the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee. The submitted documentation as per Part F - Submission of Theses for Examination, [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 9 Submission, Examination and Classification](#), in addition to the detailed letter from the Principal Supervisor indicating the reasons for early submission, must be submitted to researchexaminations@vu.edu.au.

(20) ORTQI will forward the thesis and accompanying documentation to the relevant Deputy Director, Research

Institute or nominee for review.

(21) The relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee may convene a Review Panel to assist with reviewing and approving an application.

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

Late Submissions - Post-Timely Duration

Masters by Research Degree, Master of Research, Master of Applied Research and Master of Research Practice

(23) Where a Masters candidate expects to exceed the timely duration for their degree, an [application for Late Submission](#) must be lodged as part of the Towards Submission Review. A late submission date should normally be no later than one semester post-timely duration (ie: 1.0, 1.5, 2.0 years) of their degree.

(24) Late Submission requests are approved by the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee. Alternatively, the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee may recommend Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings be invoked in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

(25) If a Late Submission date is granted and the candidate fails to submit by the approved late submission date, the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee will automatically recommend that Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings be invoked for the candidate in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

Doctoral Candidates

(26) Where a doctoral candidate expects to exceed four years (EFT), an [application for Late Submission](#) must be lodged with ORTQI two months prior to four years (EFT). The application must provide strong justification for a Late Submission beyond four years (EFT). The application 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 one semester post-timely (ie: 4.0 years) duration of their degree.

(27) All applications for Late Submission will be reviewed and thereafter may be approved by the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee.

(28) Late Submission requests are approved by the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee. Alternatively, the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee may recommend Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings to be invoked in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

(29) If a Late Submission date is granted and the candidate fails to submit by the approved late submission date, the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee will automatically recommend Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings commence against the candidate in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

International Candidates - All Degrees

(30) International candidates who exceed timely duration and have an approved Late Submission date will be required to apply for an extension to their Confirmation of Enrolment and may be required to extend their visa.

(31) International full fee paying candidates will continue to incur tuition fees at the current international fee rate for their course.

(32) International scholarship awardees whose tuition fee scholarship has ceased at timely duration will incur tuition fees at the current international fee rate for their course.

(33) International full paying candidates who received a waiver of tuition fees, which ended at timely duration, will incur tuition fees at the current international fee rate for their course.

Post-Timely Duration Fees

(34) Candidates who have exceeded the timely duration of their degree and have an approved Late Submission date of more than one semester for their degree (4.5 EFT for Doctoral, 2.5 EFT for Masters by Research, 2.5 EFT for Master of Applied Research, 2.0 EFT for Master of Research and 1.5 EFT for Master of Research Practice) will incur post-timely duration tuition fees for their enrolled status by the census date.

(35) An enrolled candidate will be charged a tuition fee per semester and candidates will be advised on the 1st July each year of the fee charged for the following year.

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

(37) 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 eCOE will be cancelled due to non-payment and reported to the Department of Home Affairs.

(38) If a domestic candidate does not pay fees 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.

(39) Candidates who have submitted their thesis for examination and the completed Release of Thesis which has been approved by the Chair of Examiners, Student Financials will reverse the post-timely duration tuition fee and liaise with candidates where a refund is applicable.

Fee Waiver for International Candidates

(40) Fee waivers awarded to an international candidate are managed in accordance with the [Fee Waiver Guidelines for International Higher Degree by Research Students](#).

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

Progress in Required Coursework Units (non-Thesis Units)

(41) At enrolment in a HDR course, candidates will be informed of the required coursework unit/s. Candidates must successfully complete all required coursework units to the required level to proceed in their degree.

(42) A candidate's progress in the required coursework will be monitored by Professor Graduate Research Programs, ORTQI (or nominee).

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

(44) Candidates 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.

(45) On completion of all required coursework and achievement of a minimum of an average of 70% across the required units, candidates may continue in their degree, or for PhD (Integrated) candidates, then undertake their Year One Thesis (see clauses (48)-(50)).

(46) If after the re-submission(s) of their final piece of assessment a candidate does not achieve the required minimum average of 70%, a member of ORTQI's Academic Programs, normally the HDR Coursework Co-ordinator, will counsel the candidate and advise them as to their options, such as course discontinuation or transfer to a more suitable course.

(47) If a candidate does not accept the option(s) proposed, Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings will be commenced against the candidate in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

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

(48) Candidates are required to achieve a minimum of 70% in their Year One Thesis, in order for them to progress to Year Two of their degree.

(49) If a candidate does not achieve a minimum of 70% in their Year One Thesis on their first attempt, and the result is between 65% and 69%, they are permitted to submit their thesis for re-assessment. After formally receiving the results of their re-assessment of their Year One Thesis, candidates are given one month to resubmit their Year One Thesis, with the average of the two assessments used to calculate the final result.

(50) After the re-assessment of their Year One Thesis, if a candidate does not achieve 70% in their Year One Thesis, a member of the ORTQI's Academic Programs, normally the HDR Coursework Co-ordinator, will contact the candidate to discuss their progress and advise them as to their options, such as course discontinuation or transfer to another course. If a candidate does not accept the option(s) proposed, Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings will be commenced against the candidate in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

Progression to Year Two of the PhD (Integrated)

(51) Once candidates have successfully completed their required coursework and/or Year One Thesis, the candidate's Candidature Confirmation process will proceed as per Part D in this Procedure.

Part D - Progression from Pre-Candidature to Candidature

(52) Whilst in Pre-Candidature, candidates participate in required induction, coursework, work with their supervisors to plan their research project and prepare a proposal according to the [Confirmation of Candidature Guidelines](#).

(53) 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
Master of Research Practice	Within 6 months (EFT) of initial enrolment
Masters by 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
Professional Doctorates	Within 3-6 months (EFT) of completion of required coursework

Pre-Candidature Extension

(54) 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.

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

Confirmation of Candidature Process

(56) Each HDR 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 [Confirmation of Candidature Guidelines](#) as well as seek guidance from their supervisor(s) during this period.

(57) 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.

(58) The Confirmation of Candidature Review Panel may:

- a. endorse the Confirmation of Candidature proposal unconditionally;
- b. endorse the Confirmation of Candidature proposal subject to changes being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of the Review Panel or Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee; or
- c. reject the Confirmation of Candidature proposal.

(59) Candidates who have their Confirmation of Candidature proposal rejected will have one opportunity to resubmit their application for Candidature.

(60) Confirmation of Candidature is provisionally approved by the relevant Review Panel once the candidate has met the criteria, including making any changes required by the Review Panel.

(61) Final approval of the Confirmation of Candidature lies with the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee.

Failure to Obtain Confirmation of Candidature

(62) Candidates who have their Confirmation of Candidature proposal rejected on their second attempt will be counselled about alternative study options and discontinuation from the course by Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee. If the candidate does not discontinue their enrolment, the University will provide notice in writing of its intention to discontinue their enrolment after 20 University business days.

(63) Where an international candidate has failed to obtain Confirmation of Candidature, ORTQI will advise Enrolments and Student Financials that their Confirmation of Enrolment will need to be cancelled and, if the candidate is sponsored, their sponsor must be notified that their candidature will be discontinued.

(64) Candidates who have not presented for Confirmation of Candidature within the timelines specified in Clause 53 will be required to present for candidature at a date and time designated by ORTQI. Failure to do so will result in the commencement of the Unsatisfactory Progress in accordance with [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

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

(65) Doctor of Philosophy candidates will be required to present for their Milestone Reviews as required for their degree to report on their academic progress. Master degrees, Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated) and Professional Doctorate candidates are not required to present for a Mid-Candidature Review due to the restricted timelines between Confirmation of Candidature and Towards Submission. Candidates should refer to Mid-Candidature Review Guidelines or Towards Submission Guidelines as well as seek guidance from their supervisor(s).

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

Doctor of Philosophy candidates	2.0 years (EFT)
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(67) 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)
Masters by Research	1.5 years (EFT)
All Doctoral Degrees	3.0 years (EFT)
Master of Research Practice	are not required to present for this Milestone due to the restricted timelines between Confirmation of Candidature and to meet a timely submission of their thesis.

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

(69) Extensions may be approved but only in extenuating circumstances by the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee.

(70) 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 Panel will provide feedback via a Milestone Report to the candidate and if the Review outcome is deemed to be Satisfactory, working with their supervisors they are encourage to integrate the feedback as appropriate into their study.

(71) The Towards Submission Review will include careful scrutiny that progress since Confirmation of Candidature and

Mid-Candidature 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 Panel will provide feedback via the Milestone Report and if the Review outcome is Satisfactory, candidates are encouraged to integrate the feedback as appropriate into their study under the guidance of their supervisors.

(72) If the outcome of the Towards Submission Review is deemed Unsatisfactory, the candidate must contact the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee no later than 10 working days after receiving their Milestone Report. A meeting with the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee, and their Principal Supervisor is to occur to negotiate a program of study with clearly defined hurdles to be achieved in the next three months of enrolment (EFT) after which the Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee will assess whether Towards Submission Review is approved or not.

(73) Candidates will not have an opportunity to present a second time for either the Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission.

(74) 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 Procedure 4 Progress](#).

All Candidature Milestones

(75) 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 Deputy Director, Research Institute 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.

Part F - Significant Changes to Candidature

(76) 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

(77) A significant change in the direction of a research project post-Confirmation of Candidature requires a new research proposal to be submitted to ORTQI for consideration by the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute 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.

(78) The University will need to 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

(79) 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) 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.

(80) The application for conversion must be made to the ORTQI for consideration by the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute or nominee using the Application for Conversion of a Research Degree (contact ORTQI).

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

(82) 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.

Conversion between Professional Doctorate and PhD

(83) A candidate may apply to convert from a professional doctorate to a PhD or from a PhD to a professional doctorate where both types of research doctorates are offered. This is done by lodging an Application for Conversion of a Research Degree (contact ORTQI) with the ORTQI for consideration by the other Research Institute.

(84) The difference in the nature/scope of the research proposed between the two degrees should be made apparent in the application for conversion submission. The request must be supported by the Principal Supervisor.

(85) If a candidate is approved for conversion to PhD on completion of their Professional Doctorate Coursework, they will be granted advanced standing for the required coursework units providing a formal application for advanced standing is submitted.

(86) Conversion between a professional doctorate and PhD can only be done prior to the thesis being submitted and formally examined.

Conflict of Roles

(87) 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 Deputy Director, Research Institute 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 or nominee.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	28th April 2020
Review Date	28th April 2023
Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
Approval Date	21st April 2020
Expiry Date	13th April 2021
Accountable Officer	Andrew Hill Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact Andrew.Hill@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	John Price Dean, Graduate Research 9919 2046
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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.