

Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 7 Supervision

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines the processes for appointing Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Principal, Associate and External Supervisors, intellectual property, candidature confirmation and supervision, candidature feedback on supervision and changes to the supervisory relationship.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Procedure outlines appointment of, and responsibilities of HDR supervisors and candidates. It applies to Staff of the University and all students and candidates enrolled in Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs.

Section 3 - Policy

(3) [Higher Degrees by Research Policy](#)

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Records provisional supervisors at the time of offer and enrolment. Records confirmed supervision and any supervisory arrangements, including registration.
Research Institutes	Approve supervisor/s arrangements (including external supervisors).
Dean, Graduate Research	Final approval of all supervisor registrations.

Part B - Requirement for Supervision

(4) From admission through to classification, all enrolled students/candidates must be undertaking their research with academic supervision. The University is committed to ensuring that each student/candidate has a minimum of two supervisors, a Principal Supervisor and Associate Supervisor must be nominated and approved at the point of admission.

Part C - Admission and Supervision

(5) Research degree applicants are expected to nominate a suitable Principal Supervisor and Associate Supervisor for their program of research. The provisional supervisors must be registered supervisors with Victoria University. Applicants can search for available Principal supervisors and Associate Supervisors (internal VU academics only) on the Victoria University website [Find a Researcher](#) page.

(6) In determining suitable supervisors, applicants should consider the following:

- a. Check the supervisors' research outputs and if possible, talk to some of their research students;
- b. Assess compatibility with the supervisor prior to enrolment;
- c. Recognise own strengths and weaknesses and identify the characteristics they are seeking in a supervisor;
- d. Discuss their expectations/style with their potential supervisors.

(7) If a suitable Principal Supervisor and Associate Supervisor cannot be sourced by the applicant, the University will be unable to admit the applicant and will notify the applicant that the application cannot proceed.

Part D - Supervision and Candidature Confirmation

(8) All supervisors must fulfil requirements for registration as supervisors, and be formally registered as supervisors at Victoria University, as outlined in the [Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Supervisor Registration and Professional Development Procedure](#). Supervisor registration has a two-step approval process. The Associate Director, Research Training (or nominee), Research Institute initially approves all new supervisor registration applications. The Dean Graduate Research (or nominee) gives final approval when the applicant has completed their supervisor induction training.

(9) Where an applicant or candidate sources an external Associate Supervisor, approval is subject to their registration as an external supervisor at Victoria University. The Associate Director Research Training, Research Institute (or nominee), must confirm their appointment, including consideration of its ability to fund any potential costs associated with this external appointment. The Dean Graduate Research (or nominee) approves all supervisor registrations.

Part E - Supervision Agreement

(10) A [Supervision Agreement](#) is to be completed as early in candidature as possible (preferably prior to 8 weeks after commencement). The agreement will then be submitted and formalised at Confirmation of Candidature. It must be signed by the candidate and all members of the supervisory team.

Part F - Joint Authorship and Intellectual Property

(11) Students/Candidates and supervisors must discuss issues of authorship, including order of authorship, prior to the conduct of any joint research or publication, in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\) \(Cth\)](#) and any related VU Policy and Procedure.

(12) In accordance with the University's [Intellectual Property Regulations 2013](#), students/candidates involved in research:

- a. that has or could result in the generation of intellectual property with commercial potential; and/or
- b. is funded by a contractual agreement; and/or
- c. in which Victoria University will make a substantial investment

must be informed in writing by the supervisory team of any conditions or contracts which could either restrict

disclosure or affect the extent to which communication with colleagues is possible during the course of the research and on its completion.

Part G - Changes in the Supervisory Team

(13) Over the period of enrolment, changes to a student's/candidate's supervisory arrangements may occur for reasons such as:

- a. Additional supervisor/s may be appointed to assist with a particular aspect of the research;
- b. The research topic may change, and this may result in the appointment of an alternate supervisor/s;
- c. The initial supervisor/s may no longer be able to supervise the research for a number of reasons, including leave or employment arrangements;
- d. The student/candidate may initiate a change of supervisor/s.

(14) Any change in supervisory arrangements for a period of three months or longer must be notified and approved using the [Application for Change in Supervision](#) form and documented in a revised [Supervision Agreement](#). The change in supervision arrangements will only be effective when the fully endorsed application has been lodged and approved with the Graduate Research School (GRS). For periods of leave less than three months, by agreement one of the Associate supervisors will normally take over the responsibilities of the Principal supervisor.

(15) Any change in supervision arising from a change in research topic must be assessed for compliance with specific requirements under any Australian law, including Sanctions Laws and Defence Export Controls.

Part H - Advice and Feedback on Supervision

(16) In accordance with the University's [Student Complaints Procedure](#) where any issues relating to supervision arise, students/candidates are encouraged to address these directly with members of their supervision team where possible. Where this is not possible, or the student/candidate is not satisfied with the outcome, a student/candidate should discuss their supervisory issues and needs at any time with the discipline leader of their area, the Associate Director, Research Training, Research Institute. Where an issue cannot be resolved at the local level, the Associate Director, Research Training can escalate the issue to the Dean, Graduate Research or nominee. Where an issue cannot be resolved at the level of Dean, Graduate Research, or nominee, a student/candidate may lodge a formal complaint by following the procedure outlined in the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) (Section 4 Part C).

(17) All students/candidates will be invited to provide feedback annually on the quality of the supervision they are experiencing through the Current Research Experience Questionnaire (CREQ) as well as through the official Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) at the conclusion of their degree.

(18) HDR Students/Candidates may also provide confidential feedback about any aspect/s of the supervision they are receiving to the respective Institute Associate Director, Research Training, Associate Dean, or Dean, Graduate Research.

Part I - Unavailability of Supervision

(19) Circumstances arise from time to time when the University becomes unable to provide adequate supervision for a designated student/candidate or project. This may be due to a change in research topic or direction, a change in the availability of a Principal Supervisor, or an irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between student/candidate and supervisor and/or supervisory team.

(20) In the case of Clause (19) the University will endeavour to source alternative supervision for the student/candidate within the University. During this period (a maximum of 20 working days), the student/candidate

will be placed on a Leave of Absence so as not to disadvantage the student/candidate in terms of enrolment.

(21) After 20 working days, if the University is unable to source alternative supervision for the student/candidate within the University, the student/candidate will have 20 working days to withdraw from their degree. If they have not withdrawn from their degree within 20 working days, the University will initiate the discontinuation of their enrolment as per [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 2 Enrolments](#) Clauses (64-67).

(22) All student/candidates who discontinue as a result of Clause (19) and Clause (21) will be provided with a Statement of Candidature to assist them if they choose to apply for Advanced Standing at another University. The Statement of Candidature will include:

- a. Degree
- b. Topic
- c. Reason for Discontinuation: No Principal Supervision
- d. Elapsed Enrolment
- e. Scholarship: RTP/University/External
- f. Milestones Completed

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(23) HESF: 3.2 Staffing; 4.1 Research; 4.2 Research Training; 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students.

(24) ESOS Act: Part 3 Division 2; Part 5 Division 2.

Section 6 - Definitions

(25) Principal Supervisor

(26) Associate Supervisor

(27) External Supervisors

(28) Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student

(29) Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Candidate

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	7th July 2025
Review Date	16th August 2027
Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact
Approval Date	17th June 2025
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	Lesley Birch Manager, Researcher Professional Development +61 3 99195014

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"External Supervisors" - Supervisors who do not hold an ongoing position or sessional contract of one year or more at Victoria University (VU). For the purposes of Graduate Research supervision academics holding adjunct or honorary appointments are considered to be internal supervisors.

"Principal Supervisor" - The primary academic supervisor of a research student, recognised as the academic leader of the candidate's supervisory team. A principal supervisor must be a doctorally qualified member of staff who is research active in a field or discipline relevant to the candidate's research.

"Associate Supervisor" - A member of staff who is research active, not necessarily in the field or discipline relevant to the candidate's research.

"Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student" - A student enrolled in a higher degree by research who has not yet achieved confirmation of candidature.

"Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Candidate" - A candidate enrolled in a higher degree by research who has achieved confirmation of candidature.