

Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 1 Admissions

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines Higher Degree by Research (HDR) academic criteria for admission, English language requirements, method for applying and the assessment and offers process.

Section 2 - Accountability

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

Section 3 - Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to domestic and international HDR applicants, and University staff administering this policy.

Section 4 - Definitions

(3) Domestic (onshore applicants) – Australian or New Zealand citizens or Australian Permanent Residents.

(4) International Applicants – A [temporary](#) resident (visa status) of Australia or a [permanent resident](#) (visa status) of New Zealand, or a resident or citizen of any other country.

Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(5) See [Higher Degrees by Research Policy](#).

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
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Office for Researcher Training, Quality & Integrity	<p>Assess applications.</p> <p>Send successful applicants offer letters.</p> <p>Co-ordinate the assessment of applications and make preliminary assessments as to the whether an applicant meets minimum academic admission criteria.</p>
Flagship Research Institute/Centres	<p>Assessment of applications to determine if the applicant is aligned with an area of research focus and suitable supervision is available.</p>
VU International (VUI)	<p>Send successful international applicants accepted by VU Research, an offer letter.</p> <p>Issue a rejection letter to applicants who have not been accepted by the Flagship Research Institute/Centres.</p>
Research Services	<p>Work with the applicants who wish to conduct part, or all, of their research using facilities through their employment, or in conjunction with a research body external to the University, to prepare an agreement securing the organisation's involvement and resources involved in undertaking the project.</p>

Part B - Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Admissions: Overview

(6) The admission of an applicant to a research degree at VU involves consideration of several factors, including whether:

- a. the applicant meets the prescribed minimum requirement for entry to the research degree in which they are applying;
- b. the applicant has sufficient disciplinary preparation and/or demonstrated research capacity to undertake the proposed research project;
- c. the initial research proposal submitted by the applicant appears to be viable (including consideration of its alignment with the Areas of Research Focus and the Fields of Research (FOR) codes deemed by the University as Priority and/or Accreditation codes);
- d. appropriate supervision for the proposed research is available;
- e. adequate facilities, infrastructure and project support for the proposed research are available;
- f. research training places are available;
- g. the admission of the applicant and acceptance of the proposed area of research is impacted by specific requirements under Australian law, for example, [Sanctions Compliance](#) or [Defence Export Controls Compliance](#).

(7) All qualifications will be assessed for equivalency in the Australian education system according to [Commonwealth Government guidelines](#) and VU's grading equivalence scales.

Part C - Academic Criteria for Admission into Higher Degrees by Research

Doctor of Philosophy

(8) To be eligible for admission for Doctor of Philosophy (AQF10), eligibility can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. a Masters by Research (AQF9) degree at H2A/Distinction level (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale). An ungraded Masters by Research will be considered for equivalency to a H1 grade if examiners' reports are provided;
- b. a Masters by Coursework (AQF9) degree with minor thesis with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale);

- c. a four-year bachelors degree or an Honours degree (AQF8) (with thesis between 12,000 - 15,000 words) with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction for the final year (above 70 per cent on VU grading scale);
- d. progress in a Masters by Research (AQF9) evidenced by timely Confirmation of Candidature and with the contribution of the proposed research and its scope equivalent for doctoral level (AQF10); or
- e. an equivalent combination of academic and research achievements, such as relevant industry and/or research experience evidenced by peer-reviewed publications, high level research projects, as determined by the relevant Flagship Institute Deputy Director or nominee; and
- f. fulfilled any other conditions relating to prerequisite study which the University may have imposed in respect of admission to the research degree.

PhD Integrated

(9) To be eligible for admission to the Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated) (AQF10), eligibility can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. Masters by Coursework (AQF9) degree without minor thesis with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale);
- b. four-year bachelors degree/Honours degree (AQF8) with average grades of at least H2A/Distinction for the final year (above 70 per cent on VU grading scale);
- c. an equivalent combination of academic and research achievements, such as relevant industry and/or research experience evidenced by peer-reviewed publications, high-level research projects, as determined by the relevant Flagship Institute Deputy Director or nominee; and
- d. fulfilled any other conditions relating to prerequisite study which the University may have imposed in respect of admission to the research degree.

Master of Applied Research

(10) To be eligible for admission, applicants must be able to demonstrate academic achievement via progression through the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) Levels or international equivalent standards, and preparation in a relevant cognate discipline to a level that is sufficient to undertake masters level research. This can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. Completion of an Australian Bachelor degree (or equivalent) in any discipline with an average grade of Distinction (or equivalent) in the final year

Master of Research

(11) To be eligible for admission, applicants must be able to demonstrate academic achievement via progression through the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) Levels or international equivalent standards, and preparation in a relevant cognate discipline to a level that is sufficient to undertake masters level research. This can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. Completion of an Australian Bachelor degree (or equivalent) in the same discipline with an average grade of Distinction (or equivalent) in the final year;
- b. Completion of an Australian Bachelor Honours degree (or equivalent) in a different discipline with an average grade of Distinction (or equivalent).

Master of Research Practice

(12) To be eligible for admission, applicants must be able to demonstrate academic achievement via progression through the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) Levels or international equivalent standards, and preparation in a

relevant cognate discipline to a level that is sufficient to undertake masters level research. This can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. Completion of an Australian Bachelor Honours degree (or equivalent) in the same discipline with an average grade of Distinction (or equivalent);
- b. Completion of an Australian Graduate Diploma (or equivalent) in the same discipline with an average grade of Distinction (or equivalent).

Masters by Research (as of 2019, no longer accepting enrolments into this degree)

(13) To be eligible for admission, to be eligible for admission, applicants must be able to demonstrate academic achievement via progression through the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) Levels or international equivalent standards, and preparation in a relevant cognate discipline to a level that is sufficient to undertake masters level research. This can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. 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);
- b. 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);
- c. 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);
- d. 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);
- e. qualified for any other award judged by the University to be of a relevant and appropriate standard and have:
 - i. 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
 - ii. fulfilled any other conditions relating to prerequisite study which the University may have imposed in respect of admission to the research degree.

Professional Doctorates

Doctor of Business Administration

(14) To be eligible for admission the applicant must be able to demonstrate academic achievement and preparation to a level that is sufficient to undertake Professional Doctorate-level research. This can be demonstrated by one or more of the following academic standards:

- a. a completed Masters of Business, or equivalent, with an average grade of at least H2A/Distinction (equivalent to above 70 per cent on the VU grading scale), plus at least five years appropriate work experience as determined by the VU Research Deputy Director of the relevant Flagship Research Institute/Centres; and
- b. evidence of professional experience in the relevant discipline 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 Professional Doctorate-level research degree; and
- c. fulfillment of any other conditions relating to prerequisite study which the University may have imposed in respect of his or her admission to the research degree.

Part D - English Language Requirements

All Applicants

(15) All applicants for HDR are required to demonstrate competency in English sufficient to work at HDR level, through meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- a. successful completion within the last two years of one of the prerequisite degrees specified for each HDR (as outlined in Part B), undertaken in a predominantly English-speaking context with English as the language of instruction and assessment. This will apply only if the qualification was delivered in:
 - i. Australia; or
 - ii. a specified English-speaking country (Canada [excluding Quebec], Fiji, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America and Zambia).
- b. IELTS (or equivalent) overall score of 6.5 (with no band less than 6.0 in Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking).
- c. a score of not less than 92 with no section score less than 22 in the internet-based Teaching of English Foreign Language (TOEFL) test, or English proficiency equivalent to the above.
- d. evidence that they have achieved the VU levels of [English Language Proficiency](#); or
- e. documented evidence of English proficiency equivalent to the above.

Additional English Language Requirements

(16) In addition to meeting the University's requirements, international applicants who will be studying in Melbourne must satisfy the English language qualifying requirement for gaining an entry visa to Australia for applicants from their country.

(17) Applicants who meet the English language requirement with an IELTS under 7.5 may be required to enrol in, or audit, a coursework unit in Academic English within their first year of enrolment.

(18) If the applicant seeks an English entry waiver, this will be assessed by the principal supervisor and the final decision for granting the English waiver lies with the Dean, Graduate Research.

Part E - Method of Application Process

(19) All applications must include:

- a. certified copies of academic transcripts;
- b. certified copies of qualification award certificates;
- c. CV with academic referees listed;
- d. certified copies of proof of citizenship;
- e. a one to two-page initial research proposal for Masters by Research and PhD degrees (including title, aims, the significance of research, methodology, and facilities required or a brief research outline of 200 words for PhD (Integrated) and Professional Doctorate applicants;
- f. evidence of relevant professional experience where this is a requirement for entry;
- g. English language evidence, e.g. IELTS.

Domestic Applicants

(20) Domestic applicants for all HDR degrees must submit an application on the [Apply for Research form](#) with supporting documentation to VU Research.

Internal Applicants

(21) International applicants (non-Australian/ New Zealand citizens or non-Australian Permanent Residents) can apply via two different methods depending on their sponsorship status:

- a. apply via the VUI online portal as a full-fee paying candidate or externally sponsored candidate; or externally sponsored candidate; or
- b. apply via the Victoria University Graduate Research Scholarship online application system if initially applying for the main Victoria University scholarship round.

Part F - Assessment of Application

(22) The Office for Researcher Training, Quality & Integrity will coordinate the assessment of applications that include all documentation as stated in clause 19 and will make a preliminary assessment as to whether an applicant meets the minimum academic admission criteria.

(23) Incomplete applications will not be considered.

(24) Applicants who are assessed as not meeting one or more of the minimum eligibility criteria will normally be informed within 20 University business days of the decision having been made that their application has not been successful.

(25) Applications that are assessed to meet minimum academic admission criteria will then be forwarded to the relevant Flagship Research Institute/Centres for assessment of whether:

- a. the applicant has sufficient disciplinary preparation and/or demonstrated research capacity to undertake the proposed research project;
- b. the initial research proposal submitted by the applicant appears to be viable (including consideration of its alignment with the Areas of Research Focus and the Fields of Research (FOR) codes deemed by the University as Priority and/or Accreditation codes);
- c. there is appropriate supervision available for the proposed research;
- d. there are adequate facilities, infrastructure and project support for the proposed research are available;
- e. there are research training places available; and
- f. the admission of the applicant and acceptance of the proposed area of research is impacted by specific requirements under Australian law, for example, [Sanctions Compliance](#) or [Defence Export Controls Compliance](#).

(26) In relation to the academic requirements outlined in the HDR Policy. Where an applicant has applied to work within a specific Flagship Research Institute/Centres within VU Research, the Deputy Director or nominee of the relevant Flagship Research Institute/Centres will also be involved in the academic assessment of the application.

(27) The final decision on an offer of admission rests with the Flagship Research Institute/Centres Deputy Director or nominee.

(28) In cases where an applicant does not meet the stipulated normal minimum entry standards but wishes to make the case for their admission, the application should include evidence of:

- a. academic and research development through credentialed and non-credentialed academic and professional learning equivalent to that normally required for entry; and
- b. demonstrated capacity to successfully undertake research within the relevant discipline, at least to the level normally required for entry to the course for which the applicant is applying.

The final decision on admission lies with the Flagship Research Institute/Centres Director or nominee and/or the Dean,

Advanced Standing

(29) HDR Candidates who have undertaken previous formal study, work experience, or have various types of practical learning that satisfy the learning outcomes/objectives of one or more of the PhD Coursework units, are eligible to apply for Advanced Standing. Candidates are requested to contact the Senior Lecturer, Graduate Research Academic Programs, Office for Researcher Training, Quality & Integrity (ORTQI) to discuss their application prior to submitting their application.

Advanced Candidature

(30) An applicant may be enrolled with Advanced Candidature if they have already achieved Candidature at another university, and have:

- a. been making satisfactory progress with that project at that university;
- b. applied and been accepted for admission to VU to continue the same project, or requested to transfer to VU with their supervisor (subject to a commencing place, resources and funding being available).

(31) Applicants may also be enrolled with Advanced Candidature if they have commenced or produced work on a documented research project prior to applying for enrolment in a PhD course, and have completed one or more papers for publication that they wish to be considered for incorporation into a PhD in the 'Thesis by Publication' format.

(32) Applicants granted Advanced Candidature must normally be enrolled for a minimum of twelve months prior to submission of the thesis for examination. In addition, there must normally be at least 12 months EFT Candidature time available before reaching the maximum duration for the research degree in which the applicant is enrolled.

(33) Applicants for Advanced Candidature must complete the [Apply for Research form](#) and the [Application for Advanced Candidature](#) form with all relevant supporting documentation and submit it to ORTQI for the relevant Deputy Director, Flagship Research Institute/Centres (or nominee) for consideration and confirmation.

(34) In cases where the application for Advanced Candidature involves prior research and publications not undertaken in a context of HDR enrolment, the review of the Advanced Candidature application will involve review of the academic merit and quality of the work proposed to be incorporated into the thesis submission, as well as the integrity of the PhD project overall and the suitability of each publication proposed for inclusion. The review should be at least equivalent to that used for Candidature Confirmation.

(35) An applicant accepted with Advanced Candidature will be admitted as a candidate immediately. Time already consumed, either through enrolment at another institution, or the equivalent amount of candidature time (for PhD incorporating prior publication/s), will be deducted from the maximum allowable duration for the respective course as outlined in clauses (11)-(15) of this Procedure.

(36) An applicant accepted with Advanced Candidature may be granted Advanced Standing for any required coursework units on submission of an Application for Advanced Standing form.

(37) A candidate at VU who wishes to transfer to another institution is required to:

- a. Contact the equivalent of ORTQI at the other institution to determine the requirements to transfer their enrolment.
- b. Apply to ORTQI for a letter outlining the details of their enrolment including the start date, end date, periods of intermission and elapsed duration of enrolment.
- c. Once the candidate has received an offer from the other institution they are required to submit a

discontinuation form to the ORTQI.

- d. Upon confirmation of the withdrawal date the ORTQI will provide a letter with final confirmation of the relevant dates of enrolment.

Collaboration with External Research Bodies

(38) Applicants who wish to conduct part, or all, of their research using facilities through their employment, or in conjunction with a research body external to the University, must work with Research Services to prepare an agreement securing the organisation's involvement and resources involved in undertaking the project.

(39) Such arrangements with organisations external to the University must be made under the stewardship of the supervisor/s and include consideration and agreement about:

- a. matters associated with [intellectual property ownership and rights \(Intellectual Property Regulations 2013\)](#);
- b. the ownership, storage, retention of and access to research data generated during the project; and
- c. any specific legislative requirements that may apply. For example, requirements under [Sanctions Compliance](#) with regard to dealing with persons or entities from sanctioned countries and requirements under [Defence Export Controls Compliance](#) to obtain a permit to transfer materials, software or technology relating to military or dual-use goods and technologies to persons located outside Australia.

Part G - Offers of Admission

Domestic Applicants - Research Training Program Fee Offset Places and Full-fee Paying Places

(40) Successful domestic applicants for HDR will be considered for a place funded under the Commonwealth [Research Training Program](#) (RTP). An RTP fee offset place exempts the candidate from paying tuition fees for the maximum duration of their degree in which they are enrolled. Candidates exceeding the maximum duration of their degree may be charged a tuition fee. Every candidate (except for full-fee paying domestic and international applicants) at VU is required to pay the [Student Services and Amenities Fee](#) (SSAF).

(41) RTP fee offset candidates must be enrolled onshore.

(42) Where an application for admission is approved by the Research Institute, but the applicant has not been successful in being awarded an RTP place, he or she will be offered the option of taking up a [full-fee paying place](#).

(43) Applicants for domestic [scholarships](#) who have been awarded a stipend scholarship are automatically awarded an RTP fee offset place.

(44) All applications for places received for the forthcoming semester will be considered in relation to the Flagship Research Institute/Centres capacity after scholarship places have been finalised.

(45) If a domestic applicant is accepted VU, VU Research will send the applicant an offer letter, which will include:

- a. a request to provide evidence of citizenship;
- b. a request to provide certified hardcopies of academic documents;
- c. details regarding the compulsory SSAF;
- d. the date by which enrolment must occur;
- e. the name of the provisional Principal Supervisor (other than for professional doctorates whose supervision arrangements will be finalised closer to the completion of the coursework phase); major course progression requirements, such as that related to performance in required coursework;

- f. any conditions, such as any course to be audited or enrolled in after enrolment;
- g. conditions of any scholarship if applicable (including the level of RTP support if offered an RTP fee offset place).

International Applicants

(46) VUI will send successful international applicants accepted by VU Research, an offer letter, which will include:

- a. any conditions which must be met before a full offer is made;
- b. the fees (and/or details of any agreed fee scholarship arrangements);
- c. the date by which enrolment must occur;
- d. arrangements for health cover;
- e. the name of the provisional Principal Supervisor (other than for professional doctorates whose supervision arrangements will be finalised at the end of the coursework phase);
- f. course code;
- g. major course progression requirements, such as that related to performance in required coursework;
- h. any conditions, such as any course to be audited or enrolled in after enrolment;
- i. conditions of any scholarship if applicable.

(47) VUI will issue a rejection letter to applicants who have not been accepted by the Flagship Research Institute/Centres.

Acceptance of International Offers

(48) Applicants who intend to accept an offer must return the [Offer Acceptance form](#) and pay the required fees before being issued with a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE). Applicants are required to provide a CoE to immigration authorities in order to be granted the appropriate student visa.

(49) On or prior to arrival the applicant must advise the University of their arrival date. VUI, in collaboration with ORTQI will make arrangements for enrolment once the applicant has arrived in Australia.

Part H - Appeals Against Admissions Process

(50) All applicants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their application may appeal (on the grounds of the process) under the VU [Student Appeals Regulations 2019](#).

Section 7 - Guidelines

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

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	30th August 2018
Review Date	30th August 2021
Approval Authority	Vice-President (Research)
Approval Date	27th July 2018
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Accountable Officer	Andrew Hill Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact Andrew.Hill@vu.edu.au
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