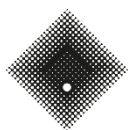


*VU Graduate Research Training
and Supervision
Quality and Standards Framework*



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

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1. Introduction

Victoria University (VU) is committed to ensuring that it systematically undertakes quality assurance and quality improvement strategies in relation to course delivery to enhance every student's learning experience. For this purpose, the University has outlined key quality measures to judge success while monitoring the learning/graduate research training and teaching/supervision at the University.

The VU Graduate Research Training and Supervision (GRT&S) Quality and Standards Framework is Stage 2 of a coherent approach to identifying, executing, monitoring and improving quality within learning/graduate research training and teaching/supervision at VU. The GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework compliments the VU Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework, which drew on the AUQA commended framework implemented at the University of Western Sydney as well as the work of a National Senior Teaching Fellowship.

The goal of the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework is a fit-for-purpose architecture that provides an effective, clear and practical mechanism for underpinning a variety of quality assurance activities in relation to graduate research training and supervision. The primary aim of the VU GRT&S Framework is to ensure that the University's higher degrees by research, delivered by VU Research, undergo continual improvement to meet state and national minimum standards and to ensure a rewarding outcome for our diverse graduate research student body. The VU GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework should be viewed as a tool to guide VU to assure the quality and standards in graduate research training and supervision at VU.

The GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework is cognisant of our diverse student body, and is designed to empower all of the University's research only and teaching and research academics and professional staff involved in the design, delivery, administration and governance of graduate research training to identify, articulate and embed good practice in graduate research training and supervision. Further, the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework aligns with current national and international graduate research training and supervision policy directions, and is supported by a series of internal policies, procedures, guidelines and instruments, such as those established for Annual and Comprehensive Course Monitoring and the Higher Degrees by Research Policies and Procedures.

The GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework draws on the findings and recommendations of the 2016 ACOLA Report of Australia's Research Training System, the Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles and the 2018, and 2007 *Australian Codes for the Responsible Conduct of Research*. Combined these significant policy documents and reports provide benchmarks for national and international standards approaches to institutional-wide quality assurance methodologies in graduate research training and supervision.

2. The GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework

The GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework is underpinned by a set of standards that guide quality assurance and quality enhancement and enable the University to meet and exceed state and national threshold standards for graduate research training and supervision, student and staff support. The advantage of this approach is that it empowers staff to make expert judgements about the quality of course design and delivery and seeks to ensure that graduate research training at VU is student-centred. A set of exemplars will be developed to support staff in implementing the Framework.

The key tenets of the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework are presented in Figure 1. This depicts a framework that operates at multiple levels. It outlines *what* is to be given priority and is made up of four interdependent components, including:

1. Course design standards
2. Support (graduate researcher and supervisor) standards
3. Course delivery standards
4. Evidence of impact of standards on quality and outcomes

The Course Design, Support and Course Delivery components provide an indication of the minimum (or threshold) levels and expectations (minimum standards) of quality graduate research training and supervision. The final component – Impact – focuses on ways in which standards outlined in each of these three components impact on student outcomes as graduate researchers and graduates, along with the sources of data to evaluate, monitor and manage the University's performance. 'Impact' also provides a broad view of mechanisms by which to gauge the overall effectiveness of the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework and its effectiveness in embedding quality and standards in graduate research training and supervision at VU.

The components and sub-components of the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework operate as part of an overall system directed toward the achievement of desired impact and based on evidence from a range of data sources. Together, these mechanisms form a holistic picture of the design, delivery, evaluation and improvement of graduate research training and supervision at VU. Taking this view of the components of graduate research training and supervision, enables staff involved in graduate researcher training to identify and manage the multiple influences and interdependencies that impact the student experience. In short, the components of the overall system provide the basis for VU to ensure that the design, delivery, support mechanisms and outcomes are evidence-based, relevant, aligned and mutually supportive.

Importantly, the thresholds in the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework should be envisaged as a base level of activity upon which staff should feel empowered to build, innovate and create approaches to graduate research training and supervision that exceed the standards to result in positive outcomes for students and themselves as supervisors or professional staff.

3. Quality Review

The attainment of the standards outlined in the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework will be monitored by review processes that are both formal and informal.

Informally, the GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework provides staff with a tool to regularly and independently undertake quality reviews, while guiding evaluation against an agreed set of high level concepts that are nationally and internationally benchmarked and validated. Formally, regular course monitoring and analysis of quality and standards will support staff to carry out extensive reviews of our higher degrees by research. These formal course review processes align with the evidence-based approach inherent in GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework and ensure that:

- Data reporting is fit-for-purpose and streamlined and targeted to the needs of VU Research and its supervising staff
- Processes are sufficiently flexible to ensure that staff can highlight areas of strong performance and engage in conversations about potential improvement areas
- Achievement and accountability are clear and supported by both review and reporting processes.

4. Implications for policy and procedures

The introduction of a coherent GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework provides an opportunity to review the ways in which the associated activities are understood and how quality is assured across the University in these domains of activity. Effective quality frameworks involve consistent application and language across domains. Each domain of the Framework must be supported by a suite of policies and procedures, along with accountabilities that clarify roles and responsibilities in implementing the Framework. Furthermore, the tenet of national codes and/or statements that have a bearing on graduate research training and supervision also need to be recognised and embedded in our policies and procedures. The GRT&S Quality and Standards Framework aligns with the intent of existing policy, course approvals, review processes/criteria and data collection, analysis and reporting, pertinent to the graduate research training and supervision, but these will require regular review to achieve alignment.

Associated policies:

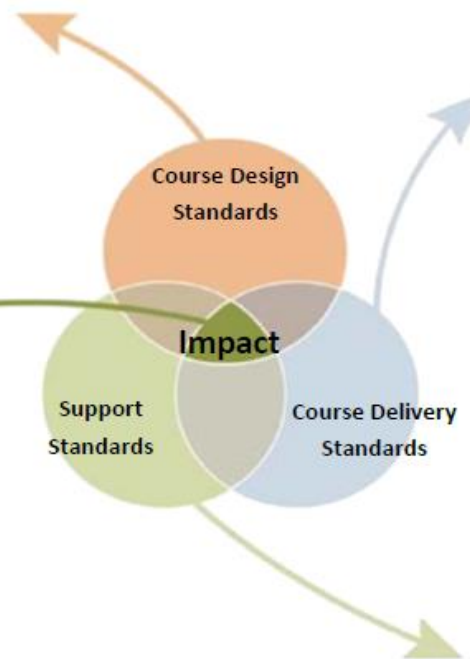
- Higher Degrees by Research Policy
- Research Integrity Policy

Associated procedures:

- Courses Lifecycle - Course Approval Procedure - Higher Degrees by Research
- Courses Lifecycle - Higher Degrees by Research Annual Course Monitoring Procedure
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 1 Admissions
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 2 Enrolments
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 3 Pre-Candidature and Candidature
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 5 Researcher Development and Support
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 6 Scholarships
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 7 Supervision
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 8 Thesis Requirements
- Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 9 Submission, Examination and Classification

Figure 1

VU Graduate Research Training and Supervision Quality and Standards Framework



- Higher degrees by research are coherent, evidence-based, benchmarked and validated, including externally
- Pathways to, and among higher degrees by research, are clear, equitable and recognize and value diversity
- Unit information is accessible, clear and consistent with learning outcomes that are current and relevant
- Clear and aligned expectations are provided for assessment in units and for the examination of these
- Active, inquiry, blended and peer based-learning are utilised
- Industry/community engagement and theory-practice links are integrated appropriately and at an appropriate level
- Course leadership and professional support and development are appropriate

- Graduate research is :
 - original and innovative
 - Ethical
 - high quality
 - prepared in a timely manner
- Graduate researchers:
 - are engaged, capable, accountable and reliable
 - develop transferable skills and capabilities
 - attain scholarly achievements
 - are facilitated to pursue further study/employment/community engagement
- Retention and progression is validated through (e.g.):
 - timely and high-quality milestone achievements assessment and examination outcomes
 - overall graduate researcher experience
 - industry/partner feedback
 - national and state benchmark analysis
 - peer review validation
 - supervisor, teaching and professional staff feedback
 - studies of graduate career experiences
 - professional accreditation (where appropriate)

- Supervisors, teaching and professional staff are engaged, capable, accountable and reliable
- Supervisors and teaching staff provide:
 - clear and aligned expectations for learning activities
 - regular and constructive feedback
 - collaborate to ensure consistency and coherence
- Supervisors:
 - have expertise and currency in relation to their research, supervisory practices and/or methodologies
 - are registered and participate in on-going professional development
 - manage the administration associated with graduate research competently and in a timely manner
 - contribute to the development of a research culture that facilitates course delivery standards
- Delivery of coursework is:
 - flexible, engaging and consistent with course design
 - consistent and equivalent across delivery instances
 - scheduled to be responsive to graduate researcher needs
- Coursework assessment is moderated and regularly benchmarked

- Graduate research administration is timely, efficient and easily accessed and navigated
- Graduate researchers
 - are situated in key areas of focus with the disciplinary support from a cohort of researchers
 - are aware of and have access to appropriate levels of course advice, learning support and professional development opportunities
 - have access to facilitated peer engagement and professional development activities
- Supervisors, teaching and professional staff selection, training and support is consistent with quality expectations
- Library services and resources are available and relevant
- Learning environments are accessible, safe, appropriate and well maintained
- Online/ICT infrastructure is up-to-date, reliable and appropriate
- Students have access to clear, fair and reliable mechanisms for resolving issues

5. Appendix A Standards and Impact

Course Design Standards

- Higher degrees by research are coherent, evidence-based, benchmarked and validated, including externally
- Pathways to, and among higher degrees by research, are clear, equitable and recognize and value diversity
- Unit information is accessible, clear and consistent with learning outcomes that are current and relevant
- Clear and aligned expectations are provided for assessment in units and for the examination of theses
- Active, inquiry, blended and peer based-learning are utilised
- Industry/community engagement and theory-practice links are integrated appropriately and at an appropriate level
- Course leadership and professional support and development are appropriate

Course Delivery Standards

- Supervisors, teaching and professional staff are engaged, capable, accountable and reliable
- Supervisors and teaching staff provide
 - clear and aligned expectations for learning activities
 - regular and constructive feedback
 - collaborate to ensure consistency and coherence
- Supervisors
 - have expertise and currency in relation to their research, supervisory practices and and/or methodologies
 - are registered and participate in on-going professional development
 - manage the administration associated with graduate research competently and in a timely manner
 - contribute to the development of a research culture that facilitates course delivery standards
- Delivery of coursework is
 - flexible, engaging and consistent with course design
 - consistent and equivalent across delivery instances
 - scheduled to be responsive to graduate researcher needs
- Coursework assessment is moderated and regularly benchmarked

Support Standards

- Graduate research administration is timely, efficient and easily accessed and navigated
- Graduate researchers
 - are situated in key areas of focus with the disciplinary support from a cohort of researchers
 - are aware of and have access to appropriate levels of course advice, learning support and professional development opportunities
 - have access to facilitated peer engagement and professional development activities
 - Supervisors, teaching and professional staff selection, training and support is consistent with quality expectations
- Library services and resources are available and relevant
- Learning environments are accessible, safe, appropriate and well maintained
- Online/ICT infrastructure is up-to-date, reliable and appropriate
- Students have access to clear, fair and reliable mechanisms for resolving issues

Impact

- Graduate research is
 - original and innovative
 - ethical
 - high quality
 - prepared in a timely manner
- Graduate researchers
 - are engaged, capable, accountable and reliable
 - develop transferable skills and capabilities
 - attain scholarly achievements
 - are facilitated to pursue further study/employment/community
- Retention and progression is validated through (e.g.):
 - timely and high-quality milestone achievements
 - assessment and examination outcomes
 - overall graduate researcher experience
 - industry/partner feedback
 - national and state benchmark analysis
 - peer review validation
 - supervisor, teaching and professional staff feedback
 - studies of graduate career experiences
 - professional accreditation (where appropriate)

6. References:

The Australian Council of Graduate Research Good Practice Principles

McGagh, J, Marsh, H, Western, M, Thomas, P, Hastings, A, Mihailova, M, Wenham, M (2016) Review of Australia's Research Training System. Report for the Australian Council of Learned Academies, www.acola.org.au

National Health and Medical Research Council (2018). Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research,

National Health and Medical Research Council (2010). Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research

Universities Australia Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships

VU Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework