

# HDR Progression Procedures

## Section 1 - Purpose

(1) These Procedures stipulate:

- a. the milestones and goals that HDR candidates should fulfill to demonstrate their progress; and
- b. how UOW should respond to assist candidates who are not progressing satisfactorily.

## Section 2 - Application and Scope

(2) These Procedures apply to all HDR candidates, HDR Supervisors, and staff who support HDR at UOW.

(3) These Procedures do not apply to offshore campuses if governed by separate procedures.

## Section 3 - Research Proposal Reviews

(4) Early in their candidature, unless enrolled in a Master of Research, candidates shall complete a written research proposal and oral presentation, called a Research Proposal Review, that outlines the research they plan to complete. This review is comparable to the confirmation of candidature at many other universities.

(5) If candidates completed a comparable review at another university before transferring to UOW, the Head of Postgraduate Studies may decide these candidates do not need to complete the research proposal review again, especially if the research proposal has not changed substantially since this previous review.

(6) The written research proposal should typically comprise between 5000 to 10 000 words for candidates enrolled in a doctoral Degree and 3000 to 7000 words for candidates enrolled in a Masters degree. Faculties and schools can stipulate the duration of oral presentations.

(7) Faculties and schools can design the process, format, requirements, and contents of this review; however, the written proposal and oral presentation should usually include:

- a. an abstract, an overview of the research, or both;
- b. a literature review to justify the research question, aim, importance, and unique contribution of this research;
- c. an outline and defence of the design, methods, and methodology;
- d. ethical, legal, and safety considerations;
- e. the budget, such as the necessary resources or travel;
- f. a timeline of activities to complete;
- g. a communication plan, such as the likely publications and conference presentations.

(8) The candidate shall complete the research proposal review within 1.5 EFTSL if enrolled in the PhD (Integrated) and within 1 EFTSL otherwise, but shall attempt to complete this review several months earlier.

(9) In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Postgraduate Studies can approve an extension of up to one session if:

- a. events the candidate could not have prevented or foreseen, such as illness, impeded progress but have now been addressed;
- b. the candidate has already completed a chapter that reports some research, such as prepared a systematic review, or progressed to a comparable extent.

(10) The Review Committee assess the research proposal review, using the Research Proposal Review form for Doctoral Candidates or Master of Philosophy candidates, respectively. The Review Committee must include the Supervisors as well as two independent, informed academics. At least one of these informed academics shall have developed:

- a. expertise in quantitative analysis unless the research does not entail quantitative analysis;
- b. expertise in qualitative analysis unless the research does not entail qualitative analysis.

(11) The Review Committee will be granted the opportunity to ask the candidate questions about the research.

(12) To encourage independent feedback and to prevent or manage conflicts of interest:

- a. at least one of these informed academics should, if possible, be a member of another discipline, school, or faculty;
- b. to assess supervision, the informed academics should be provided an opportunity to meet the candidate without the presence of supervisors;
- c. neither of these informed academics should have developed close personal, business, or legal relationships with the Supervisors or candidate outside work, or be materially dependent on these individuals, in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#);
- d. a person who is not a supervisor of the candidate should chair this Review Committee.

(13) The Review Committee shall usually include a HDR student representative and may also include other members, provided these attendees are chosen to benefit the progress and wellbeing of the candidate.

(14) The Review Committee shall assess whether:

- a. the Supervisors of the candidate have developed the requisite capabilities in the theories and methods of the research project;
- b. the candidate has acquired, or could readily acquire, the capabilities they need to complete the project, such as scholarly writing skills;
- c. the research project is suitable and feasible within the timeline, available resources, budget, and ethical constraints as well as compliant with relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures;
- d. the scope of this project is appropriate to this degree.

(15) The Review Committee should convene promptly to decide whether:

- a. the proposal is satisfactory;
- b. the proposal is satisfactory, pending specific changes the committee has stipulated;
- c. the written proposal, oral presentation, or both should be revised, to various extents, within three months.

(16) Usually within 10 working days of the oral presentation:

- a. the Review Committee will complete an evaluation report;
- b. the Head of Postgraduate Studies will approve or amend the evaluation report and send this report to the Graduate Research School;

- c. the Graduate Research School will distribute this report and the decision to the candidate;
- d. a Supervisor or other member of the panel will discuss this report with the candidate.

(17) If the revised proposal is also deemed as unsatisfactory, but the Review Committee believe, with appropriate support, the research could achieve a doctoral level award, the Review Committee shall recommend that:

- a. a period of intensive supervision, or probation, be arranged or the supervisory panel be modified; and
- b. a third review be completed within 0.5 EFTSL after the period of intensive supervision is completed successfully or after the supervision panel is modified.

(18) If the Review Committee believes the research could achieve only a masters level award, this panel may recommend a Master of Philosophy. Otherwise, the Review Committee may recommend the candidate discontinue.

(19) If the the revised proposal is also deemed as unsatisfactory and the Review Committee recommends intensive supervision, a transfer to Masters level, or discontinuation, the Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research will consider this recommendation and communicate a decision to the Dean of Graduate Research. The Dean of Graduate Research will be asked to reach a final decision after reviewing all documentation. The Dean of Graduate Research may recommend intensive supervision, a transfer to Masters level, discontinuation, or consider an alternative action. The Dean of Graduate Research or nominee will advise the candidate, Supervisors, and Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research of the final decision.

(20) Before the Dean of Graduate Research can recommend discontinuation, candidates shall be advised of this impending discontinuation and granted 20 working days to present other relevant information, such as:

- a. the impediments to progress, such as problems with supervision or resources;
- b. how these impediments could be overcome or managed in the future.

(21) Before discontinuing the candidature, the Dean of Graduate Research will first advise the candidate of this impending discontinuation and grant the candidate 20 working days to present other relevant information, such as:

- a. the impediments to progress, such as problems with supervision or resources;
- b. how these impediments could be overcome or managed in the future.

(22) Candidates who are discontinued may appeal the decision, in accordance with the [HDR Student Academic Complaints Policy](#).

(23) Candidates who are experiencing personal, academic, logistical, or other problems that might impede their progress should inform their Supervisor promptly and document these challenges.

## **Section 4 - Annual Progress Report**

(24) In the latter half of each year, the Graduate Research School shall initiate a review of every HDR candidate, except candidates enrolled in the Master of Research, called the Annual Progress Report, that seeks to:

- a. formulate a plan that specifies the research activities, milestones, and training that candidates will attempt to complete over the next year, developed in consultation with their Supervisors;
- b. evaluate the progress of candidates on their research, milestones, and training honestly but constructively;
- c. identify the challenges that candidates and Supervisors are experiencing as well as measures that could address these challenges, information that staff may consider when they need to reach decisions about requests to seek extensions and tuition waivers; and

- d. ascertain the extent to which the candidates and Supervisors are complying with the goals documented in their [Commencement of Candidature Form](#).

(25) Although the Graduate Research School and Head of Postgraduate Studies should remind candidates of their obligation to complete the Annual Progress Report on time, candidates assume the responsibility to submit their sections of this report by the due date.

(26) Principal Supervisors shall complete their section of the report by the due date. If unable to complete this section on time, in special circumstances, they can delegate this responsibility to another supervisor provided this Supervisor is eligible to be a Principal Supervisor.

(27) To promote candid responses, the candidate and Principal Supervisor shall not be granted access to the responses of another, on questions that could be sensitive. However, before they submit their respective reports, the Principal Supervisor and candidate should meet to:

- a. discuss concerns about the research or relationship;
- b. attempt to resolve these concerns and discuss plans to both address unresolved concerns and progress efficiently.

(28) The Head of Postgraduate Studies, after receiving and reviewing the Annual Progress Report from both the candidate and Supervisors, shall decide whether the progress was satisfactory.

(29) If the progress is deemed as satisfactory, the Head of Postgraduate Studies will submit the report to the Graduate Research School and, therefore, the candidate can be re-enrolled.

(30) If the progress report is deemed as unsatisfactory, the Head of Postgraduate Studies will recommend some remedial actions to the Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research who shall then endorse or amend these actions.

(31) If the Head of Postgraduate Studies believes these concerns are resolvable within a few months, remedial actions may include:

- a. some additional training or milestones;
- b. changes to the supervision panel;
- c. other solutions to address these concerns.

(32) If the Head of Postgraduate Studies and Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research believe these concerns may not be resolvable within a few months, they may recommend the Dean of Graduate Research impose a period of intensive supervision.

(33) To decide which actions to recommend, the Head of Postgraduate Studies may consult the candidate and supervisors, either individually or collectively, as well as the Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research.

(34) The Graduate Research School will inform the candidates of the actions approved by the Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research.

(35) If HDR candidates do not complete their sections of the Annual Progress Report by the due date, they will receive a written warning from the Graduate Research School.

(36) If candidates do not submit the Annual Progress Report within one month after this written warning, their candidature may be discontinued, unless another due date was arranged because of exceptional circumstances. To re-enrol, discontinued candidates must submit a new online application and would be treated like any HDR applicant.

## Section 5 - Mid-candidature Review

(37) Doctoral candidates shall complete a mid-candidature presentation or paper, a milestone that is designed to both support these individuals and to maintain accountability.

(38) The candidate shall usually complete the mid-candidature review within 2.5 EFTSL if enrolled in the PhD (Integrated) and within the 2.0 EFTSL otherwise.

(39) During the review, these candidates should outline the literature and their research questions, methods, and progress to date as well as outline the challenges they experienced and how they have modified their plan to address these challenges or improve their research.

(40) To confirm this review has been completed, in the Annual Progress Report, the principal Supervisor shall confirm that at least two informed academics, outside the supervision panel, have evaluated this presentation or paper.

(41) Faculties or schools could introduce an alternative to this review that is equivalent in rigour if approved by the Graduate Research Committee.

## Section 6 - Other Milestones

(42) Faculties, schools, or institutes may impose other milestones that candidates need to fulfill before the degree is conferred, such as a short course or an oral examination, but only if:

- a. this milestone is stipulated in the letter of offer;
- b. this milestone is imposed on all candidates within the faculty, school, or institute;
- c. this milestone can be completed within a short duration, such as two days; and
- d. the Graduate Research Committee has approved this milestone.

(43) Some candidates may decide to diverge substantially from their research proposal, such as replace the central topic, theme, concept, or key outcome variable with an alternative or change the methodology from entirely qualitative to entirely quantitative or vice versa. In these instances, the Head of Postgraduate Studies may organise an informal review to evaluate the quality of this updated proposal.

## Section 7 - Minimum Training

(44) The offer letter to Candidates shall specify the minimum level of training that candidates must complete, if any.

(45) The offer letter should stipulate:

- a. the nature and magnitude of training that candidates must complete;
- b. the topics that candidates must learn;
- c. the years in which the candidates must complete this training; for example, some training, such as workshops on research integrity, may need to be completed before the research proposal review.

(46) This minimum level of training must be organised or endorsed by the Graduate Research Committee and include:

- a. a significant level of training in research integrity, including training around falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, authorship, data management, artificial intelligence, and research ethics;
- b. training in research, personal, and career skills.

(47) Candidates shall maintain evidence they have completed the minimum level of training. This evidence might include certificates of completion or summaries of the skills they acquired.

(48) Candidates cannot be awarded the degree until they fulfill this minimum level of training unless approved by the Dean of Graduate Research in exceptional circumstances.

## Section 8 - Intensive Supervision or Probation

(49) Only the Dean of Graduate Research, upon advice from the Associate Dean - Higher Degree Research, may impose a period of intensive supervision, previously called probation, if:

- a. candidates do not achieve their milestones within three months of the due date;
- b. progress of these candidates is more than four months behind the timelines they agreed with their Supervisor to fulfill;
- c. for more than one month, candidates have not been assigned two Supervisors, despite repeated attempts of the faculty to resolve this problem;
- d. candidates repeatedly fail to fulfill their responsibilities, as stipulated on the [Commencement of Candidature Form](#);
- e. these candidates do not comply with relevant [UOW Policies or Procedures](#).

(50) The Graduate Research School will notify candidates:

- a. that, because of concerns about their progress, they will be assigned a period of intensive supervision;
- b. of the procedures around this period;
- c. of their right to appeal within 20 working days.

(51) The faculty will appoint a senior academic who has not established an ongoing relationship with either the candidate or Supervisors outside work as intensive Supervisor, in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#), to oversee the supervision and research progress for 3 to 6 months FTE as well as to guide, to support, and to encourage the candidate.

(52) Within two weeks after the period of intensive supervision is imposed, the Intensive Supervisor will complete a Milestones Agreement in consultation with the Supervisors, detailing the goals and milestones the candidate shall attempt to complete.

(53) In this Agreement, candidates should also detail how they will manage past or potential impediments to their progress.

(54) The candidate will sign to indicate they have read the Intensive Milestones Agreement and were granted an opportunity to amend and to contribute towards these milestones.

(55) Candidates who fail to participate in this discussion about milestones and thus do not sign this agreement may be discontinued after 20 working days.

(56) After the period of intensive supervision ends, the Intensive Supervisor will submit a Final Intensive Report to the Dean of Graduate Research.

(57) The report will outline the milestones achieved during this period, delineate the impediments to progress, and recommend an outcome, such as continuation of enrolment, discontinuation of candidature, course transfer, change of supervision, or another period of intensive supervision if uncertain.

(58) The recommended outcome should primarily depend on whether the candidates fulfilled the milestones and has demonstrated significant progress.

(59) The Dean of Graduate Research will notify candidates of the outcome as soon as practicable after a decision is reached.

(60) Unless the decision is to continue the enrolment, candidates shall be granted 20 business days to supply the Dean of Graduate Research with other evidence or information that invalidates the decision, such as overlooked impediments to progress that have now been resolved or could soon be resolved. If the decision is not reversed, candidates may appeal, in accordance with the [HDR Student Academic Complaints Policy](#).

## Section 9 - Complaints Policy and Procedures

(61) Candidates who experience conflicts or disputes that cannot be readily resolved and do not revolve around research misconduct should respond in accordance with the [Higher Degree Research Student Academic Complaints Policy](#).

## Section 10 - Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Academic Unit	Academic units that manage HDR candidates are the UOW Schools and AIIM
Annual Progress Report (APR)	Annual review of candidates, completed by candidates, principal supervisors, and the Head of Postgraduate Studies
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Administrative unit responsibility for the administration and management of HDR candidates
Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidate	A student enrolled in a Doctorate or Research Masters at UOW and whose body of work is incomplete or is under examination
Research Proposal Review (RPR)	A milestone that comprises a written research proposal and oral presentation that candidates shall complete early in their candidature

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	20th December 2024
<b>Review Date</b>	20th December 2029
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Institutional Policy Manager
<b>Approval Date</b>	20th December 2024
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Executive</b>	Eileen McLaughlin Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research and Sustainable Futures)
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Simon Moss Dean of Graduate Research
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Graduate Research School