

Research Proposal Review Guidelines

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of these Guidelines is to outline the process involved in the preparation, presentation and assessment of the Research Proposal Review (RPR). The RPR is an important step in ensuring that the research project is based on a strong academic footing, that the student has the skills required to complete the project at the required standard, that the supervisory arrangements are appropriate to the project, and that the project can be undertaken adequately with the resources available.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) These guidelines apply to all HDR students, their supervisors and academic units.

Section 3 - Timeframe

(3) As part of their responsibilities to Higher Degree Research (HDR) students outlined in the [HDR Supervision and Resources Procedures](#), academic units are expected to conduct the RPR, which is a formal review of the candidate's research proposal.

(4) The RPR should be completed early in the candidature, as follows:

- a. between 1.0 and 1.5 EFTSL (1 – 1.5 year full-time enrolment or equivalent) of the thesis component of the degree for doctoral students.
- b. between .5 and 1 EFTSL of the thesis component of the degree for Master of Philosophy students.

(5) The EFTSL associated with coursework in the MPhil, PhD (Integrated) and professional doctorates should not be counted when calculating when the RPR should take place.

(6) Students of the Master of Research do not need to complete a RPR.

Section 4 - Composition of Committee

(7) The RPR involves a Research Presentation which must be made before a Research Proposal Review Committee (RPRC). Faculty guidelines define the composition of the RPR Committee for each faculty; but each committee must have the following members as a minimum:

- a. three (3) staff members: the student's supervisors, and one or two appropriate members of academic staff capable of assessing the research proposal,
- b. a postgraduate research student representative as an observer.
- c. where appropriate, given the research project, a person external to the academic or research unit may be nominated to the committee.
- d. the RPR should not be restricted to members of the RPR Committee and faculties may advertise that members

of the relevant school are welcome to attend

Section 5 - RPR Presentation

(8) The RPR should cover the following areas:

Research Presentation

(9) The candidate must deliver a presentation that outlines the research question, aims, significance, approach and originality of the project.

(10) The scope of the research should be appropriate for the degree.

(11) The presentation allows the Research Proposal Review Committee to assess the candidate's capacity: to clearly articulate their research question; to explain the significance of the research; to explain how they will do the research; and to respond to questions about their research.

Research Plan

(12) This should provide more detailed information and include information about the project's background, how it will be approached (e.g. hypothesis, experimental design, methods, theoretical approach, etc as applicable), outline of the thesis chapters and draft timelines for completion of the project.

(13) In addition, it should identify any ethical, conflict of interest, IP and safety issues relevant to the project and how these will be addressed, and any potential problems likely to impede progress and suggest solutions to these problems.

Preliminary Literature Review

(14) The literature review should demonstrate that the candidate has a good knowledge of the field of the research project including the published findings of other researchers and the areas requiring original research.

Statement of the resources required to complete the project

(15) This statement should identify any materials, training, travel or access to infrastructure required to complete the project. In particular students should identify any changes in resource or infrastructure needs beyond those identified in the "Commencement of Candidature" agreement completed at the first formal meeting between the student and their supervisors.

(16) Students should also identify any training, expert assistance or specialist library resources required for completion of the project.

Committee Questions

(17) The Committee will have the opportunity to ask further questions of the student and their supervisor concerning the appropriateness of the research project for the degree, standard of the research plan, adequacy of resources available for the project and appropriateness of existing supervisory arrangements for completion of the project. These considerations will contribute to the committee's recommendations.

(18) The student will have the opportunity to address the committee directly.

Section 6 - RPR Outcome

(19) The Committee will make a decision on the outcome of the RPR.

(20) The completed RPR report must be signed off by the HPS and lodged with the Graduate Research School. A copy should be kept in the relevant faculty.

(21) The student will normally be notified of that decision by the faculty within 10 working days of the RPR and provided with a copy of the signed report.

(22) If the outcome is satisfactory, no further action is necessary.

(23) If the outcome is unsatisfactory, the student will be required to undertake a further RPR in accordance with Sections 8 - 10.

Section 7 - Unsatisfactory RPRs

(24) If it is determined at the first presentation that the RPR is unsatisfactory the HDR student should represent the RPR within three months of the first presentation.

(25) The Head of Postgraduate Studies should provide the student a copy of the RPR report with the advice that the student will need to represent.

(26) The student should be given adequate direction and support by the supervisory team to improve the presentation before the second RPR takes place.

Section 8 - RPR Representations

(27) The composition of the second RPR should, as far as possible, be the same as the first to allow the panel to make appropriate judgements on any progress and improvement.

(28) The proceedings of the second RPR should be the same as the first, outlined under Section 5 of these Guidelines.

(29) At the conclusion of second RPR, the panel will make one of the following recommendations:

- a. allocate a Satisfactory outcome for the RPR, or
- b. allocate an Unsatisfactory outcome for the RPR and:
 - i. downgrade the student's enrolment to Master of Philosophy,
 - ii. put the student on official probation (see section 11 of these guidelines) for a designated period,
 - iii. change the supervisor,
 - iv. refer the student to RESH900/901 Fundamentals for HDR Writing, or
 - v. recommend to the Dean of Graduate Research that the student be discontinued (see section 10 of these Guidelines).

(30) The completed RPR report must be signed off by the HPS and lodged with the Graduate Research School. A copy should be kept in the relevant faculty.

Section 9 - Outcome of Representation

(31) If the 2nd RPR is unsatisfactory the Research Proposal Review Committee should make a recommendation to the Associate Dean Research on the student's continued candidature.

(32) The Associate Dean Research will refer this request, with their comments, to the Dean of Graduate Research who will make a final decision.

Section 10 - Probation

(33) If the student is placed on probation, a probationary supervisor must be appointed by the Head of Postgraduate Studies.

(34) A meeting will be held with the student, the probationary supervisor and current supervisors, to define the milestones and timeframes to be completed.

(35) A written copy of these milestones will be provided to the supervisors, students and GRS.

(36) These students need to be managed as per the probation process and not be required to represent their RPR for a third time while on probation.

(37) Students who successfully complete the probation process must present their RPR within .5 EFTSL, or one session of completing probation.

(38) In the case of a student who does not complete probation successfully, the faculty Associate Dean Research will make a decision on the student's continued candidature which will be referred to the Dean of Graduate Research for a final decision.

Section 11 - Discontinuation

(39) In the case of a recommendation for discontinuation, the RPR panel should make a recommendation to the Associate Dean Research of the faculty.

(40) If the Associate Dean Research supports the recommendation, s/he will refer the RPR report and discontinuation recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research.

(41) The Dean of Graduate Research will review the report and any other associated information.

(42) If the Dean of Graduate Research supports the recommendation for discontinuation, he will write to the student to inform them of their discontinuation.

(43) The student will be given a 20 day period to appeal their discontinuation, as per the [HDR Student Academic Complaints Policy](#).

Section 12 - University HDR Award Rules

(44) All HDR candidates must adhere to the University [Higher Degree Research \(HDR\) Award Rules](#) at all times.

Section 13 - Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
ADR	Associate Dean Research
GRS	Graduate Research School
HDR student	Higher degree research student (i.e. PhD, PhD(Int), MPhil, MRes student)
HPS	Head of Postgraduate Studies
IP	Intellectual Property
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RPR	Research Proposal Review

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