

Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure

Purpose

This procedure specifies eligibility and selection criteria and the processes for admission to all Higher Degree Research (HDR) programs at UNSW.

Scope

This procedure applies to admission to all HDR programs at UNSW.

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Principles and Objectives

Section 1: Eligibility and selection

Applicants for Higher Degree programs must meet all eligibility requirements prior to being considered for selection. Successful completion of a Higher Degree Research program depends on a range of factors: a

candidate's prior academic performance and research capability, the suitability of the research environment for the proposed research and a high-quality supervision team. Selection of candidates for admission to Higher Degree Research (HDR) programs will be based on the assessment of these factors and:

- meeting the eligibility criteria plus any additional requirements specified by the Faculty Higher Degree Committee (HDC), and
- the availability of appropriate supervision, and the resources considered necessary to support successful completion of a timely research candidature in accordance with the [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#), [Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure](#), [Higher Degree Research Scholarships Policy](#), [Higher Degree Research Scholarships Procedure](#), and [Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Candidates Guideline](#).
- for international applicants, demonstrating to the satisfaction of the University that the applicant meets the Genuine Temporary Entrant requirements set by the Department of Home Affairs.

1. Language requirements

All applicants for HDR programs must satisfy the University's English language proficiency requirements as determined by the Academic Board.

2. Minimum academic requirements

The applicant must have the requisite academic qualifications and relevant research experience to be able to successfully complete the program. In addition to the minimum academic requirements, Faculties may specify other selection criteria that applicants are required to meet to demonstrate their capacity for success in the program.

Doctor of Philosophy

2.1. The minimum academic requirement for admission to the Doctor of Philosophy is one of the following:

- a) an appropriate four year degree of Bachelor with first or upper second class Honours from the University of New South Wales; or
- b) a Masters by Research or Masters of Philosophy from the University of New South Wales with a substantial research component and demonstrated capacity for timely completion of a high quality research thesis; or
- c) a qualification from a tertiary institution at a level considered equivalent by the Faculty HDC to 2.1 (a) or (b).

Professional Doctorate

2.2. The minimum academic requirement for admission to the Professional Doctorate is one of the following:

- a) an appropriate four year degree of Bachelor with first or upper second class Honours from the University of New South Wales; or
- b) a Masters by Coursework degree in a relevant professional field with a distinction average and a significant research component, minimum equivalent 12 units of credit, consisting of methodology training and a stand-alone research project; or
- c) a qualification from a tertiary institution at a level considered equivalent by the Faculty HDC to 2.2 (a) or (b).

Master by Research

2.3. The minimum academic requirement for admission to the Master by Research is one of the following:

- a) an appropriate four year degree of Bachelor with second class Honours from the University of New South Wales; or
- b) a qualification at a level from a tertiary institution considered equivalent by the Faculty HDC to 2.3 (a).

Master of Philosophy

2.4. The minimum academic requirement for admission to the Master of Philosophy is one of the following:

- a) an appropriate Bachelor degree in the relevant discipline from the University of New South Wales; or
- b) a qualification from a tertiary institution at a level considered to be equivalent by the Faculty HDC to 2.4 (a).

3. Assessing capability to undertake a higher degree research program

It is critical that the applicant has had the appropriate level of research training, disciplinary knowledge and experience to be successful in the HDR program for which they have applied. Evidence of research capability can be from research undertaken within an academic program or research activities undertaken during employment, while performance in coursework demonstrates disciplinary knowledge.

Research within an academic program

3.1. Research within an academic program means the applicant has undertaken a scholarly investigation resulting in related outputs which typically includes a supervised research dissertation as a component of an undergraduate and/or postgraduate program sufficient to assess research potential at the disciplinary level. This includes a research project, dissertation or thesis which demonstrates:

- a) The applicant has undertaken research comprising design and conduct of a scholarly investigation in an existing body of knowledge.
- b) The applicant has critically analysed and evaluated the outcome in that body of knowledge and effectively communicated this through written and verbal means.
- c) A combination of formal research courses and research activities and outputs where (a) or (b) alone do not demonstrate a sufficient level of research experience.

Research from professional experience

3.2. Research from professional experience means the applicant has professional/industry experience such as employment in a research position or practice in a creative discipline. They must be able to demonstrate how this experience can be considered equivalent in duration and there should be related outputs which are deemed equivalent to research within an academic program.

Coursework assessment

3.3. Assessment of coursework for admission should examine both the disciplinary knowledge gained and the grades achieved.

- a) Disciplinary knowledge should be appropriate to the proposed research, providing the requisite prior learning that will support a timely completion.
- b) Overseas qualifications will be assessed for comparability to Australian qualifications.

4. Additional requirements

4.1. In addition to the minimum academic requirements stated above, the Faculty HDC may specify other selection criteria that applicants are required to meet to demonstrate their capacity for success in the program.

- a) Examples of additional requirements may include relevant professional or industry experience, a portfolio of creative works, or an audition.
- b) If the HDC is not satisfied with the qualifications submitted by an applicant, the HDC may require the applicant to undergo such assessment or carry out such work as the HDC may prescribe, before recommending admission as a candidate in the degree.
- c) Faculties are responsible for ensuring that clear, unambiguous, timely and constructive advice is given to prospective candidates on the precise nature and extent of the additional selection criteria.

5. Professional Doctorate advanced standing pathway

- 5.1. Where applicants for a professional doctorate have recently completed a coursework masters at UNSW in a directly relevant discipline, they may apply for advanced standing to the professional doctorate of a maximum of 24 units of credit.
- 5.2. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research will review applications for advanced standing following recommendation from the Postgraduate Coordinator.
- 5.3. If the application for advanced standing is approved, the units of credit will be deducted from the overall candidature time entitlement of the Professional Doctorate program.

Section 2: Applying for admission

1. General requirements

Documentation

- 1.1. All applications must be accompanied by documentation which provides evidence of qualifications, language proficiency, research experience and professional experience where applicable. Applications are accepted throughout the year and must be submitted to the UNSW application system. Faculties may also have specific guidelines for documentation. Minimum documentation requirements are as follows:
 - a) Academic transcripts and proof of degree completion for all degrees attempted. Where these are in a language other than English, they must be accompanied by a translation and a statement verifying that this is an accurate translation of the transcript. Details of recognised translators are provided on the UNSW website: (<https://www.unsw.edu.au/document-certification>);
 - b) UNSW will verify documents either directly with applicants with the original or via back-to-source checks with the applicant's home institution and with referees. Information on certification of documents is provided on the UNSW website: (<https://www.unsw.edu.au/document-certification>);
 - c) A statement of intended area of research or brief research proposal written by the candidate (see Faculty guidelines);
 - d) Declaration and proof of financial capacity to cover living costs, tuition fees, and other study related costs, including costs for dependants;
 - e) Proof of interview and contact with the proposed supervisor who has indicated their willingness to supervise, or Faculty Expression of Interest outcome;
 - f) Curriculum vitae;
 - g) Evidence of meeting English language requirements (where applicable);
 - h) Published papers and/or portfolio of works, or other examples of previous research;
 - i) Contact details of two referees;
 - j) Copy of passport or visa (where applicable);
 - k) Where qualifications have been completed in another name the application must be accompanied by documentation evidencing the change of name; and
 - l) Applicants with refugee status and other applicants who cannot provide documentation of previous educational qualifications due to circumstances existing in their home country should provide a statutory declaration stating the qualification(s) and their inability to obtain documentation, for review by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research.

Working away from the University

- 1.2. Enrolled candidates are expected to undertake their research at a UNSW affiliated location such as a UNSW campus, teaching hospital, or other research facility of the University.
- 1.3. Candidates must meet the minimum residency requirement of twelve months (full-time equivalent) at a UNSW affiliated institution to ensure they have access to the support, infrastructure, and experience to

successfully complete their HDR program. Once enrolled, any requests to work away from a UNSW affiliated location are managed per the Variation to Candidature Procedure.

- 1.4. If the research will require the candidate to spend time away from the University from the beginning of the program, approval must be sought from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research prior to admission.
- 1.5. Information must be provided by the applicant, the supervisor and the School outlining the arrangements for the following:
 - induction into research at UNSW (including the HDR Welcome and Orientation);
 - confirmation of candidature (PhD candidates only);
 - Research Progress Reviews;
 - UNSW supervision arrangements including how contact will be maintained;
 - confirmation of supervision arrangements where the candidate will be working externally;
 - provision of research resources; and
 - a plan for undertaking any compulsory coursework.

2. Suspension or exclusion

Applicants with a current or prior record of suspension or exclusion from UNSW or another higher education provider must disclose this at the time of application. Applicants who have been suspended or excluded from UNSW or another higher education provider are not permitted to commence study while the suspension or equivalent action remains in force.

3. Transferring from another Higher Education Provider

A transfer of candidature means the research conducted in an HDR program from another institution will be used towards a HDR program at UNSW. An applicant enrolled in an HDR program at another higher education provider who wishes to transfer to UNSW must submit an application, meet eligibility and selection criteria, and provide additional documentation about their current or most recent HDR enrolment.

Documentation

- 3.1. Candidates must provide at a minimum (but not limited to):
 - a) documentation of the period of full-time equivalent enrolment at the other higher education provider (includes international candidates).
 - b) documentation showing the acknowledgement of the other higher education provider of the transfer. This includes:
 - copies of all research progress review documentation;
 - details of current or previous research scholarships;
 - statement outlining reasons for requesting transfer;
 - evidence of agreed supervision arrangements at UNSW;
 - permission to contact relevant staff at the previous higher education provider;
 - agreement to transfer any research and/or Intellectual Property when candidates transfer their research to UNSW (where applicable);
 - agreement to transfer research data from existing institution to UNSW;
 - a proposed research data management plan; and
 - details of existing ethics approval/s (where applicable).

Conditions where transfers will not be approved

- 3.2. If the candidate is within 12 months of the completion of an HDR program at another higher education provider unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 3.3. If the transfer request is due to a dispute or lack of progress at the other higher education provider.
- 3.4. Where progress is not satisfactory. The most recent progress review must endorse that the candidate is on track to complete within 4 years FTE (PhD) or 2 years FTE (Masters).

- 3.5. The ESOS Act and National Code requires that an international candidate on a student visa may not transfer from another Australian registered provider's course prior to the candidate completing six months of their principal course of study unless under specified exceptions as outlined in the National Code.
- 3.6. If there are Intellectual Property or research data issues that cannot be resolved with the previous higher education provider.
- 3.7. If the candidature was terminated at the other higher education provider.
- 3.8. If the candidate does not meet other admission requirements.

4. Recognition of prior research

- 4.1. An applicant may be considered for recognition of prior research undertaken at another higher education provider. The prior research must meet the following requirements:
 - a) the work has not been submitted for examination at this or any other higher education provider
 - b) the quality and nature of the research work are suitable relative to the proposed area of research at UNSW
 - c) the work can be completed in the remaining time available in the degree at UNSW
 - d) there is agreement to transfer research data from the existing institution to UNSW
 - e) a proposed research data management plan.
- 4.2. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research will review any such cases following recommendation from the Postgraduate Coordinator or Associate Dean Research Training (or equivalent). If approved, the time already consumed at the other higher education provider will be deducted from candidature time entitlement of the HDR program at UNSW.

5. Recognition of prior learning coursework

There is no recognition of prior learning of coursework programs for admission to HDR Programs at UNSW.

Section 3: Offers

1. Admission offer process

Offers of admission to HDR programs shall be made in writing by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research or an approved admission delegate noted in Schedule 1 of UNSW Delegations. A verbal communication, informal email or other indication regarding eligibility for an offer is not a formal offer and is not binding.

Unconditional offers

- 1.1. Unconditional offers of admission will include:
 - details of the program, research area, commencement date, thesis submission date, supervision arrangements, residency or fee-liability type/status, location, attendance mode and attendance type, any coursework required, and any details of documents required to be provided to UNSW prior to enrolment.

Conditional offers

- 1.2. When the applicant does not meet certain eligibility and selection requirements, the University may issue a conditional offer as follows:
 - a) On the basis of expected academic requirements.
 - b) In some cases, based on meeting English proficiency requirements.
 - c) In the form of a packaged offer to applicants who have the academic qualifications required for entry, but who do not currently meet UNSW English proficiency requirements. Packaged offer

arrangements are only applicable for prescribed English courses studied at UNSW College, and are subject to acceptance by UNSW College.

- d) Applicants will only be admitted to the research program once evidence has been supplied that the prescribed conditions have been satisfactorily met.

2. Deferral process

- 2.1. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research may approve deferral of commencement of enrolment in HDR programs from one admission period to another. In such cases the School and/or Faculty must confirm that appropriate space, resources and supervision are able to be provided at the later commencement date, and the applicant must still meet all other eligibility requirements, including English language proficiency. Where deferral in a program is permitted, the standard deferment period is up to two terms.
- 2.2. In extenuating circumstances, a deferral of up to one year may be approved, provided appropriate supervision, space and resources are available.
- 2.3. Applicants must apply for deferral using the method and by the due date advertised by the Graduate Research School.
- 2.4. Applicants will receive confirmation of their deferred place.
- 2.5. If the deferral period lapses, the offer is no longer valid. However, the applicant may be permitted to reapply for admission.
- 2.6. A candidate who is granted a deferral will be liable for any tuition or other fees at the rate applicable in the year of enrolment.

3. Withdrawal of offer

- 3.1. The University reserves the right to withdraw an offer and/or cancel the enrolment of a person in cases where:
 - a) an offer is made in error
 - b) an offer is made based on incomplete, inaccurate, fraudulent or misleading information supplied by the applicant or certifying authority. In such cases, fees paid may be forfeited
 - c) supervision is no longer available
 - d) an applicant does not provide information required by the University within the timeframe specified
 - e) an applicant has failed to disclose prior misconduct findings at any higher education provider
 - f) where there is a failure to meet any condition of offer by the specified date
 - g) the University is not satisfied that an international applicant or candidate meets the Genuine Temporary Entrant or Genuine Student requirements set by the Department of Home Affairs.
- 3.2. The recommendation to withdraw an offer will be made to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research will notify the applicant in writing if the offer and/or enrolment has been withdrawn.

4. Expiration of offer

The University reserves the right to set expiry dates on offers at its discretion. Applicants who do not accept or defer an offer or enrol by the published deadline will forfeit their offer.

5. Denial of admission

If a School or Faculty does not wish to recommend an offer of admission to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research, the applicant will be notified in writing by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research that their application has been unsuccessful.

6. Appeal procedures

An applicant not selected for an HDR Program may have the right of appeal. The following process applies:

- 6.1. An appeal must be made in writing and specify the grounds for the appeal and be lodged with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research within 10 working days of the date of the notification of denial of admission.
- 6.2. The grounds for appeal are based on a lack of procedural fairness or inconsistent application of University policy or procedure. Evidence to support the grounds for appeal regarding the decision to deny admission must be provided.
- 6.3. Once an appeal has been considered by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research, the University does not provide any further internal avenues of complaint or appeal.

Section 4: Acceptance and enrolment

1. Acceptance of offer

Acceptance process

- 1.1. Applicants who have received an unconditional offer can accept, defer or decline their offer online via myUNSW. International applicants will be required to sign a *Declaration of Financial Capacity* and most will be required to pay a deposit. Information about the acceptance process is provided on UNSW website.

Issuing Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE)

- 1.2. Once international applicants have accepted their offer and either paid the deposit or submitted sponsorship or other funding information, a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) will be issued by the Graduate Research School. This document can be used to apply for a student visa.

Student Services & Amenities Fee

- 1.3. All candidates are required to pay a Student Services and Amenities fee in each term of enrolment.

Change of International status

- 1.4. If an international HDR candidate gains Permanent Resident status:
 - a) after gaining admission but before the census date in any term, the candidate will be transferred to domestic Higher Degree Research enrolment status and will not be liable for tuition fees for that term.
 - b) after gaining admission but after the census date in any term, the candidate will remain liable for fees at the international candidate fee rate for that term.

2. Enrolment

Candidate responsibility

- 2.1. All candidates are required to ensure enrolment and contact details are correct by regularly checking myUNSW. International candidates are responsible for contacting the Department of Home Affairs if their details change.

Multiple enrolment

- 2.2. Candidates are not permitted to enrol in a degree, diploma or certificate program at the same time as they are enrolled for any other degree, diploma or certificate in the University or at any other higher education provider in Australia or overseas, except with the approval of the Faculty or Faculties concerned and the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research. This includes candidates who are under assessment for any component (coursework or research) in another degree.

Enrolment cancellation

- 2.3. In accordance with the [Variation of Candidature Procedure](#), The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research may discontinue enrolment in an HDR program in the following cases:
- a) Any candidate who is found to be enrolled, without approval in more than one degree, diploma or certificate program. If the multiple enrolment is not resolved after a period of suspension, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research may cancel the enrolment.
 - b) Transcripts, documents and/or other information provided during the application process or during the candidature are subsequently found to be inaccurate, or full disclosure of prior study is not given, the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer or cancel an enrolment at any time.
 - c) Supervision arrangements for a candidate change and a suitable alternative supervisory team cannot be found within a reasonable time period.
 - d) It is established that a candidate does not have the financial capacity to support themselves and their dependants.

3. Re-admission procedure

Re-admission conditions

- 3.1. A candidate wishing to re-enter a program after a period of non-attendance without an approved leave of absence or after withdrawing from or discontinuing a program must apply for approval of re-admission.

Re-admission approval process

- 3.2. Applications for re-admission will be considered by the appropriate Faculty HDC and a recommendation made to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research (or an approved re-admission delegate noted in Schedule 1 of UNSW Delegations) on whether re-admission should be approved. A candidate who is permitted to re-enrol following a period of non-attendance, will be required to satisfy the program requirements which apply at the time of readmission.
- 3.3. Prior EFTSL consumption will be assessed at the time of application. The candidate will not necessarily retain credit for any work completed prior to the absence, depending on the length of absence and developments in the research area during the intervening period.
- 3.4. If a candidate discontinued prior to responding to a request to Show Cause, the application will need to address the issues identified in the original request to Show Cause. Any subsequent permitted enrolment will be considered in accordance with the [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#).
- 3.5. Applications should include information about the research data from the previous project, including agreement to use this in the current project (where applicable)
- 3.6. A proposed research data management plan.

4. Denial of re-admission

Availability of supervision, space and resources

- 4.1. Re-admission will not be permitted if appropriate supervision, space and resources are no longer available.

Failure to respond to a Show Cause

- 4.2. Re-admission will not be permitted in cases where the candidate discontinued prior to responding to a Request to Show Cause and failed to satisfactorily address the issues raised in the Show Cause letter upon applying for re-admission in accordance with the [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#).

Version: 3.2

Effective: 19 March 2025

Responsible: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training) and Dean of Graduate Research

Lead: Director, Graduate Research School

Appendix 1: Honours 2/1 equivalence

Qualification	Description of equivalence
Honours 2/1 Australian Qualification	3 year Bachelor degree from an Australian University followed by a discrete Honours year including an appropriate research component with an Honours 2/1 result.
	4 year (or more) Bachelor degree from an Australian University incorporating an Honours qualification including an appropriate research component with an Honours 2/1 result.
Honours 2/1 Equivalence: other academic qualifications (Australian and International)	4 year (or more) Bachelor degree with a research component included sufficient to allow assessment of research potential at the disciplinary level and where weighted average grades for the research component and coursework results are at least equivalent to 75/100.
	3 year (or more) Bachelor degree followed by completion of a Masters by Research where the research component is no less than 2/3 of the program. If the Masters by Research is equivalent to that of UNSW, it can be deemed Honours 1 equivalent.
	3 year (or more) Bachelor degree followed by Masters (Coursework) with a research component sufficient to allow assessment of research potential at the disciplinary level and where weighted average grades for the research component and the coursework results are at least equivalent to 75/100.
	3 year (or more) Bachelor degree followed by another type of postgraduate qualification that contains a research component sufficient to allow assessment of research potential at the disciplinary level and where weighted average grades for the research component and coursework results are at least equivalent to 75/100.
	A combination of academic and professional qualifications that demonstrate achievement at Bachelor and/or Master level including appropriate research components that allow assessment of research potential at the disciplinary level and where weighted average grades for the research component and the coursework results are at least equivalent to 75/100.
	A 3 year Juris Doctor degree (or equivalent) with a research component sufficient to allow assessment of research potential at the disciplinary level and where weighted average grades for the research component and the coursework results are at least equivalent to 75/100.
Qualifications completed more than 5 years before application	A qualification assessed as Honours 2/1 equivalent and completed more than 5 years prior to the start date of the HDR program requires additional evidence of appropriate work and/or research experience not undertaken as part of the award course and demonstration of research potential via a written research proposal and support confirmed by appropriate referees and the proposed supervisors.

Appendix 2

Authority for procedures and instructions

The following UNSW officers are authorised to maintain and change this procedure in accordance with the *Policy Framework Policy*:

1. Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training) and Dean of Graduate Research
2. Director, Graduate Research School

Legislative compliance

This policy is intended to ensure that UNSW complies with the:

1. *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth)
2. *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* (Cth)
3. *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Cth)
4. *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW)
5. *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (Cth)
6. *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
7. *Disability Standards for Education* (2005)

Supporting documents

- [Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy](#)
- [Delegations Policy](#)
- [English language proficiency requirements](#)
- [Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Candidates Guideline](#)
- [Higher Degree Research Scholarships Policy](#)
- [Higher Degree Research Scholarships Procedure](#)
- [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#)
- [Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure](#)
- [Research Data Governance & Materials Handling Policy](#)
- [Research Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure](#)
- [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#)
- [Variation of Candidature Procedure](#)
- [Register of Delegations](#)

Definitions and acronyms	
EFTSL	Equivalent Full Time Study Load
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HDC	Higher Degrees Committee

Version history

- **Version 1.0** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) on 23 March 2011 effective 23 March 2011. New procedure.
- **Version 2.0** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research on 16 March 2016 effective 16 March 2016. Full review.
- **Version 2.1** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research on 22 August 2017 effective 22 August 2017. Sections 2.1(iv); 5.2.3; 6.2.
- **Version 2.2** approved by President and Vice-Chancellor on 5 November 2018 effective 1 January 2019. Minor amendment to accommodate 3+ academic calendar.
- **Version 3.0** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise on 17 June 2022 effective 17 June 2022. Full review.
- **Version 3.1** approved by Director of Governance on 1 August 2024 effective 6 August 2024. Administrative update to remove outdated titles and policy references.
- **Version 3.2** approved by the Director of Governance on 19 March 2025, effective 19 March 2025. Administrative update to align with UNSW Delegations.