Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the fundamental principles under which higher degree research (HDR) supervision is conducted at UNSW.

Scope

The scope of this policy applies to HDR candidates, UNSW staff and affiliates, and HDR supervisors, who are acting in a supervisory capacity.

Introduction

UNSW requires high quality supervision for HDR candidates to ensure good quality outcomes, including a positive candidate experience, a timely completion, and the development of a high quality research graduate.

1. Supervisory teams

All candidates, upon admission to a higher degree research program, must have a supervisory team of at least two supervisors appointed.

2. Qualifications, knowledge and skills

2.1.   Supervisors must have the qualifications, knowledge and skills commensurate with their roles.

2.2.   Supervisors must be actively engaged in the development of their professional practice in supervision.

2.3.   Supervisors must also have an active and continuing participation in research at UNSW.

2.4.   Role descriptions, qualifications and eligibility requirements are outlined in the *Higher Degree by Research Supervision Procedure*

3. Promotion of a culture of responsible conduct of research

UNSW has adopted the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* as outlined in the *Code of Conduct and Values*. Supervisors are expected to lead a culture which fosters the responsible conduct of research. Candidates are expected to understand their obligations to conduct research responsibly and with integrity.

4. Respectful relationships

Supervisors should be mindful that the supervisory role is inherently hierarchical with an imbalance of power between supervisors and candidates. UNSW is committed to supporting the Universities Australia *Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships*. Supervisors and candidates should be professional and uphold the conduct, integrity and ethical behaviour expected of students and staff as outlined in UNSW policies. UNSW staff and affiliates have an obligation to act in accordance with the *Code of Conduct and Values* at all times. Relationships of a sexual or romantic nature between supervisors and candidates are inappropriate.

5. Conflicts of interest

All UNSW staff and affiliates have an obligation to disclose any actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest which may arise in relation to a higher degree research supervision arrangement in accordance with the *Code of Conduct and Values* and *Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management Procedure*.

Principles for HDR supervision

6. Proactive engagement in forming and cultivating a positive, professional relationship founded on mutual respect and trust

6.1.   Supervisors and candidates are expected to clarify the expectations of each other's role, including maintaining clear and regular communication, scheduling and preparing for meetings, developing plans, meeting milestones, and providing feedback.

6.2.   Supervisors and candidates need to be conscious and respectful of the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in their relationship.

6.3.   Supervisors and candidates must declare any conflicts of interest related to the composition of the supervisory team, including supervisors on the team who are in a relationship.

6.4.   Candidates and supervisors are expected to engage proactively with university processes for resolving conflict with all parties working together in good faith and with mutual respect. Schools and Faculties are expected to proactively and sensitively manage any such conflicts and grievances.

6.5.   Supervisors, Schools and Faculties must work together to provide continuity of supervision throughout the candidature and must work with the candidate to source alternate supervision in cases where a change in supervision is needed.

6.6.   Candidates must have a key role in identifying their supervisory team prior to submitting an admission application and during candidature in cases where there is a need for a change in supervision.

7. Promotion of a strong research training culture and environment based on an intellectual and collegiate research community

7.1.   Supervisors and candidates are key members of the research community and are expected to engage in developing and promoting a culture supportive of networking, mentoring and development.

7.2.   Supervisors and candidates are expected to engage in publication and/or dissemination of research findings appropriate to disciplinary norms.

7.3.   There should be a focus on expanding the candidate's research, professional and transferable skills to support their career development.

7.4.   Supervisors and candidates need to be mindful about managing conflicts of interest and competing interests in such areas as authorship, data and intellectual property, in view of the power imbalance in the relationship.

8. Promotion of responsible research practices according to the fundamental principles of research integrity, safety, transparency and rigour

8.1.   Supervisors, in consultation with the Head of School, are expected to identify and agree that appropriate facilities and resources are available to support the proposed research in a safe and responsible manner.

8.2.   Supervisors and candidates must understand and comply with UNSW policy on workplace health and safety, including undergoing training, reporting any hazards and incidents, and considering all health and safety aspects of the research being undertaken.

8.3.   Supervisors and candidates must understand and comply with relevant national standards and University policies, and proactively seek specialist advice where they are unsure.

8.4.   Supervisors must promote training and education for candidates in the responsible conduct of research.

8.5.   Supervisors and candidates must understand and comply with UNSW policy on research data management, including undergoing training, establishing what the data is, ownership and access, and recording and storing data.

9. Development of candidates as independent researchers capable of producing original research

9.1.   Supervisors must support candidates throughout the research degree to facilitate a successful completion within a reasonable timeframe.

9.2.   There is a mutual responsibility for supervisors and candidates to work together to develop feasible research proposals.

9.3.   Supervisors and candidates must work together to maintain consistent progress, engage in regular research progress reviews, and complete candidature in a timely manner as defined in the Conditions for Award Policy for the relevant Higher Degree.

9.4.   Supervisors, Faculties and Schools must engage in consistent and proactive reporting and management of all aspects of candidature from admission, to confirmation of candidature, to progress reviews, to thesis examination.

9.5.   Supervisors must support candidates in the preparation of an examinable thesis and undertaking the oral examination and advise the candidate on addressing feedback from examiners.

Appendix

Authority for procedures and instructions

The following UNSW officers are authorised to maintain and change the procedure sections of this policy 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 Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 (Cth)

Supporting documents

- Register of Delegations
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships
- Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy
- Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines

Related documents

- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- Code of Conduct and Values
- Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy
- Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management Policy
- Complaints Management and Investigations Policy & Procedure
- Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Candidates Guideline
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Oral Examination Procedure
- Research Authorship and Publication Dispute Management Procedure
- Research Data Governance & Materials Handling Policy
- Research Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure
- Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy
- Thesis Examination Procedure

Version History

- **Version 1.0** approved by Academic Board (AB06/151) on 7 November 2006 effective 1 January 2007. Full review and re-issue as a policy.

- **Version 2.0** approved by Vice-Chancellor on 9 August 2010 effective 9 August 2010. Minor modification and re-structuring to all sections.

- **Version 3.0** approved by President and Vice-Chancellor on 11 December 2012 effective 7 December 2012. Minor revisions in response to PhD Review and updating supervisor eligibility and removal of suspension (3.9.6 added)

- **Version 3.1** approved by Head of Governance on 18 July 2014 effective 18 July 2014. Administrative update to Section 3.7.1 (b).

- **Version 4.0** approved by President and Vice-Chancellor on 15 June 2016 effective 15 June 2016. Full review.

- **Version 5.0** approved by President and Vice-Chancellor on 2 October 2020 effective 2 October 2020. Full review.

- **Version 5.1** approved by President and Vice-Chancellor on 12 December 2023 effective 12 December 2023. Minor revisions in relation to professional development, health and safety policy and oral examination.

- **Version 5.2** approved by Director of Governance on 1 August 2024 effective 6 August 2024. Administrative updates to outdated titles, links and policy references.