FACILITIES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH STUDENTS

Guidelines	
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Associated Documents	UNSW Research Student Handbook 2009/10

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1. Introduction

UNSW is committed to providing all Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates with the highest quality research experience. The provision of facilities and resources appropriate to the candidate's specific research project is a crucial element in achieving this goal. Completion rates, submission times, satisfaction with the HDR program and research outcomes are all closely related to the provision of infrastructure.

Throughout these Guidelines, the term 'infrastructure' refers to the provision of information, facilities and resources appropriate for the specific research program. Schools play an essential role in ensuring that candidates are admitted to HDR study only where appropriate space, facilities and resources can be provided to support the candidate's research project. Schools must strive to achieve optimal standards of support for postgraduate research candidates. The Guidelines in this document address the responsibilities of Schools, Faculties and the University regarding the provision of information, facilities and resources for UNSW research candidates.

2. Offers of Candidature

The Head of School is only able to approve an offer of candidature subject to the School being able to provide appropriate space, resources and supervision. Specifically, the Head of School must be satisfied that the proposed research project is feasible to undertake in the School with the approved supervisor(s), and will not be constrained by a lack of equipment or infrastructure. This includes issues related to School infrastructure, Faculty facilities and resources (such as computer rooms, laboratory space and workshops) and University infrastructure (e.g. specialist library collections or high performance computing). If funds will be required for candidates to spend time at other institutions or gain remote access to resources vital to their research project, Schools must ensure that an appropriate source of financial support is identified.

3. Information Provided to Candidates

3.1 Induction

Candidates must undergo an induction process as soon as practicable after commencement of candidature during which they can be informed of School and University facilities and services available to them throughout their candidature.

(i) The Graduate Research School provides a University induction program for all new research candidates. Candidates are provided with information regarding targeted services available through the Graduate Research School and other units across the University, including the Learning Centre, Library, Counseling Service and Careers and Employment. Information is also provided for international research candidates

regarding English language skills courses offered by the Institute of Languages as well as the general programs and resources available from UNSW's International Student Services (ISS). All information presented at induction is also available on the Graduate Research School website and in the *Research Students Handbook* and *Essentials for Postgraduate Research Students*. These books are provided by the Graduate Research School to all new research candidates. UNSW@ADFA and the College of Fine Arts also hold campus specific inductions for their research candidates.

(ii) Larger Faculties and Schools also offer induction programs that outline discipline specific support and introduce key contacts, processes and requirements that may be mandatory for research students (e.g., seminars, compulsory coursework).

3.2 Early Meeting with Supervisor and Postgraduate Coordinator

As Higher Degree Research programs are offered in such a wide range of disciplines, there is considerable variability in the resource needs of students in each Faculty and discipline. Schools must therefore clearly articulate what facilities and other support (such as travel for conference attendance) will be available to HDR students enrolled in the School.

An early meeting between the student and the candidate's supervisors and/or Postgraduate Coordinator is essential, prior to commencement of candidature or within a few days of commencement, to discuss both general infrastructure support (including building access, access to office or lab space, tea and washroom facilities, photocopying, consumables, travel, internet access, on-campus mailing address) and project specific support (such as support for fieldwork, testing, technical support, statistical services, equipment access, laboratory space, consumables) which will be provided to the candidate by the School. This meeting will minimise ambiguity over what has been agreed to at the commencement of candidature and ensure that expectations are realistic and understood by both the candidate and supervisor(s).

Schools should provide readily accessible information to new candidates regarding the name and contact details of the School Postgraduate Coordinator, targeted School resources and how best to effectively utilise the research infrastructure and become involved in the research culture of the School.

3.3 Ancillary Support

The Graduate Research School provides information online and in the above publications regarding ancillary student support services available at the University such as counseling, health, careers and employment, childcare, the Student Equity and Disability Unit, the Arc (the UNSW student organisation), and accommodation including facilities designed specifically for postgraduate research students.

4. Specific Facilities and Resources

4.1 Provision of Infrastructure

All research candidates, on commencement of their research, are expected to be provided with:

i. Appropriate study space to conduct their research, i.e.,
   - All full-time postgraduate research students should ideally be provided with shared office accommodation that includes a sole-use desk, lockable cabinet and bookshelf facilities. If, at times, a sole-use desk is not available to every full-time candidate, shared use of a desk or other satisfactory, flexible arrangements should be negotiated between the School, the supervisor and the candidate.

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- Part-time postgraduate research students should ideally have shared accommodation and at least shared use of a desk.
- It is acknowledged that some Schools face major space and accommodation problems. The University is committed to improving the availability of office facilities for all postgraduate research students and provides a dedicated Postgraduate Research Student Study Space in the Kensington Campus Library. This facility is jointly managed by the UNSW Library and the Graduate Research School.

ii. Appropriate workspace and laboratory/studio space and equipment/consumables to conduct their research. This space will be arranged by their School and supervisor or Postgraduate Coordinator and should be discussed at the consultation outlined in 3.2 above.

iii. Technical support and research and communication tools such as access to the web, access to the University wireless internet, and a UNSW e-mail account.

iv. Computing equipment and appropriate software for their research. Postgraduate research students must have access to on-campus computer facilities for data analysis, writing and information access. This might involve use of desktop computers, mainframe systems or high performance computing systems or time; networked printing; technical advice; and help with academic software supported by the University.

v. Appropriate photocopying facilities

vi. Full library services including Australian and overseas interlibrary loans

vii. Fax, postage and an on-campus mailing address (see 4.2 below)

viii. Tea room and wash room facilities

4.2 Infrastructure Commensurate with Project Requirements

Provision of infrastructure such as photocopying, printing, funds for research travel and field work, outside mail, controlled STD or ISD telephone use and fax use need to be commensurate with the requirements of research topic and thesis writing. What is a reasonable limit will vary from School to School and student to student and at different stages of the candidature. These issues should be discussed at the start of candidature as outlined in section 3.2.

4.3 'After Hours' Access to Work Space

With due regard to security and safety, there should be 'after hours' and ideally 24 hour access for postgraduate research candidates to their offices, labs or shared work spaces.

4.4 Work Away From Campus

When away from campus, on approved leave to conduct research, candidates must have reasonable access to University Internet services and other resources required to support their research and thesis preparation.

4.5 Conference Presentations

All HDR candidates are strongly encouraged to present their work at conferences. The UNSW Postgraduate Research Student Support (PRSS) Scheme assists currently enrolled postgraduate research students to attend and present their research at local and international conferences. Ideally, PhD candidates should be supported to present at national conferences at least twice or at an international conference at least once during candidature. Masters candidates should ideally be supported to present at a national conference at least once during candidature. Where PRSS funds are insufficient, it is highly desirable that Schools/Faculties contribute to conference registration and attendance costs. It is acknowledged that the level of support offered will vary between Schools and Faculties and individual supervisors.

4.6 School Culture and Professional Development Opportunities

Candidates should be encouraged to engage in and contribute to the professional life and culture of the School wherever possible. Schools should offer suitably qualified candidates the opportunity to tutor, demonstrate or engage in other professional development activities, within

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the University's guidelines on work for Higher Degree Research candidates[1]. These opportunities should be discussed at the consultation outlined in 3.2 above.

4.7 Library Resources

Schools should encourage candidates to make effective, efficient use of library resources. This will often require participation in general induction sessions and tours, as well as specialist courses run by the University Library. The Library also provides personal consultations for candidates on key information resources in their area of research.

5. Ongoing Review of Support Requirements

5.1 Meeting with Supervisor and/or Postgraduate Coordinator

Students should raise any issues regarding the appropriate level of support for their research with their supervisor and Postgraduate Coordinator in the first instance.

5.2 Progress Reviews

Progress Reviews provide a formal mechanism for the candidate's support requirements to be reviewed annually. Candidates and supervisors are asked to review the resources required and available to conduct the candidate's project and identify and discuss any issues or additional requirements at the annual Review meeting. This issue is addressed specifically in the Annual Progress Review Form in Section C4 Resources, with the following question:

> 'Do you have sufficient resources to support your research program? If No, please elaborate on the current level of resources available and detail any additional resources required for the completion of your research program.'

6. Acknowledgements

These guidelines draw upon the University of Melbourne's *Infrastructure Support for Postgraduate Research Students: The Responsibilities of Academic Departments*; the University of Queensland's *Infrastructure Guidelines for the Support of Research Higher Degree Students in Enrolling Units;* and the University of Western Australia's *Infrastructure Guidelines for the Support of Research Higher Degree Candidates*.

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[1] Guidelines on employment for HDR students available in: UNSW Research Students Handbook 2009/10 – Sections 6.8 and 9.7