



Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Next review date
2.1	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	22 August 2017	22 August 2017	May 2020
Procedure Statement				
Purpose	To outline the procedures for variation of higher degree research candidature			
Scope	This procedure applies to all research candidates, supervisors and positions responsible for management of higher degree research (HDR). The relevant Conditions for Award Policy should be read in conjunction with this procedure.			
Are Local Documents on this subject permitted?	☐ Yes, however Local Documents must not breach mandatory requirements in University-wide Codes of Conduct, Policies, Standards and Procedures.			☒ No
Procedure Processes and Actions				

The types of variations of candidature that are included in this procedure are outlined below:

- Changes in research area and/or supervisor
- Transfer from one program to another within the university
- Leave for any reason
- Fieldwork and working at non-UNSW approved locations
- Transfer between full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) enrolment
- Extension of candidatures beyond the maximum period
- Discontinuation at the student's request (withdrawal)
- Discontinuation or termination of candidature when a candidature lapses
- Discontinuation when replacement supervision is unavailable.

When there is a need for a candidature to be varied, the request and any additional documentation must be submitted to the Graduate Research School (GRS) for approval by the Dean of Graduate Research. Variations with minor likely impact on candidates or candidatures can be recommended by either the candidate themselves or the postgraduate research coordinator (PGC). Variations that are likely to have a more significant impact on candidates or candidatures are recommended by the Faculty Higher Degree Committee or equivalent (hereafter referred to as the Committee). **Appendix A** shows a summary of the approval pathways required for different categories of candidature variation.

1. Changes in supervision, research area and/or program

1.1. Rationale

Changes in candidature supervision arrangements, research area and program can involve issues relating to resources, supervisor eligibility and workload, Commonwealth Government sanctions and candidate eligibility. Research candidates may be financially disadvantaged if the changes impact adversely on scholarship eligibility and for international candidates, changes may affect visa and sponsorship eligibility. It is important that these issues are addressed appropriately prior to approval of requested changes.

1.2. Approval process

- The candidate must complete a request via the variation module of the Graduate Research Information System (GRIS), indicating the variation(s) being requested.
- Requests for change to research area and/or program must be approved by the candidate's supervisor. However there are situations where a supervisor's approval may not be required. Examples include where a supervisor has resigned from the University or in cases where there is a breakdown in the relationship between supervisor and candidate.
- All requests must be approved by the postgraduate research coordinator or Head of School, recommending that the variation(s) be approved.

- iv. Requests for program transfer must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the GRS website.

1.3. Changes in supervision that are not at the request of a candidate

In some instances, changes in supervision arrangements may be required by the University. Any such changes that are not requested by the candidate should be managed according to the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure*.

1.4. Sourcing alternative supervision

In some instances, availability of alternative supervision which meets with the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure* may be limited. In such cases candidates must take an active role in seeking appropriate supervision which meets requirements of the Procedure.

The University will support the candidate to identify and seek the agreement of new supervisors.

If the search for alternate supervision is protracted, then the candidate must take program leave until the appropriate supervision is confirmed (see also Section 4.4).

2. Leave, fieldwork, working at external locations or FT - PT transfers

2.1. Leave

Candidates may request to take a period of leave from their program. When a candidate is on approved leave, they are not enrolled and not consuming semesters in their candidature. Candidates must not conduct work towards their degree at any time when not enrolled.

For periods of maternity or sick leave of less than a semester, enrolment status is typically maintained. Such absences should be agreed between the candidate, supervisor and School, either prior to, or at the time of the absence. The period of time can be noted at the following Annual Progress Review and this can be taken into account if an extension of candidature is required at a later date.

The latter does not apply in cases of extended maternity leave or sick leave due to a protracted illness and candidates should seek advice from the GRS on leave conditions under these circumstances.

2.2. Field work and working at external locations

When candidates are on approved fieldwork and/or working at non-UNSW locations, they are enrolled and consuming semesters. It is important that arrangements are made by the School or Faculty to ensure candidates are appropriately supervised and that issues relating to resources, workplace health and safety, intellectual property and research progress are considered and managed appropriately.

2.3. Transfer between FT and PT candidature

A transfer between FT and PT candidature is a straightforward request that typically is a result of a change in circumstances relating to a candidature. It is important that these are recorded on the Student Information Management System (SiMS) for accurate calculation of the time consumed and to ensure that the candidate has the level of support appropriate to their circumstances.

2.4. Approval process

- i. The candidate must complete a request via GRIS, indicating the variation(s) being requested.
- ii. All requests must be approved by the candidate's supervisor, indicating support for the variation(s) unless there are issues involved such as those outlined in Section 1.2 ii.
- iii. All requests must be approved by the postgraduate research coordinator or Head of School, recommending that the variation(s) be approved.
- iv. Leave requests beyond the one year permitted must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the GRS website.
- v. Requests to undertake fieldwork or work at an external location for a period of more than one year must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the variation form.

3. Extension of candidature

3.1. Extension

Circumstances may arise during a candidature where the research is not progressing as planned. This may result in the need to apply for an extension beyond the maximum period permitted for completion of a degree.

The Committee:

- i. may recommend a one semester extension if satisfied that circumstances outside the control of the candidate have impacted on the candidature. A maximum of two, one semester extensions may be recommended by the Committee
- ii. Should only recommend extension beyond two semesters in total where extenuating circumstances are demonstrated.

Extenuating circumstances usually include significant technical or academic issues, including supervision, that are outside the control of the candidate. They do not typically include personal circumstances that require long periods of nonattendance during a semester. Under the latter circumstances, candidates should be advised to transfer to part-time enrolment or to apply for leave or discontinuation of candidature.

3.2. Approval process

- i. The candidate must submit a request via GRIS, indicating the variation(s) being requested.
- ii. All requests must be approved by the candidate's supervisor, indicating support for the variation(s) unless there are supervision issues involved such as those outlined in Section 1.2 ii.
- iii. All requests must be approved by the postgraduate research coordinator or Head of School, recommending that the variation(s) be approved.
- iv. Requests to re-enrol beyond two years for a Masters or four years for a PhD must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the GRS website.

4. Discontinuation or Termination of Candidature

4.1. Discontinuation at the candidate's request

In some situations, candidates may not be in a position to complete their candidature and therefore they may wish to withdraw from their candidature. Candidates must submit such requests via GRIS.

4.2. Discontinuation after lapsed candidature

Candidates who fail to re-enrol and subsequently do not respond to lapsed candidature notification and/or requests for information relating to their candidature may have their candidature discontinued by the University.

4.3. Show Cause after lapsed candidature

Where a response to the lapsed candidature notification is received, the Committee will consider the response and recommend an action to the Dean of Graduate Research. The candidate may be asked to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated if the response received is inadequate as outlined in the *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure*.

4.4. Discontinuation when replacement supervision is unavailable

If a candidate's supervisory arrangements cease for any reason then attempts should be made to source alternative supervision as per Section 1.4. However if replacement supervision is not able to be agreed within a reasonable timeframe, discontinuation of candidature may be required as outlined in the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure*.

4.5. Discontinuation on the basis of financial inability to support candidature

If it is established that a candidate no longer has the financial capacity to support themselves and any dependents the University may discontinue their candidature. Candidates should inform their supervisor and PGC if they are experiencing financial stress and, where possible, this should be addressed at the School level. If continued financial difficulties are experienced the matter should be referred to the Dean of Graduate Research to evaluate the case and determine whether discontinuation of enrolment is appropriate.

4.6. Approval Process

- i. If a candidate chooses to withdraw from the program as per Section 4.1 then no further approval is required and the request will be processed by the Graduate Research School. Requests must be made via GRIS in order for the supervisor, School and the Graduate Research School to be notified of the request.
- ii. If the candidature is discontinued by the Dean of Graduate Research as outlined in Section 4.2, 4.3 or 4.4 then the candidate will be notified in writing.

- iii. Candidates whose candidature is discontinued may reapply for admission at a later date. The application will be considered by the Committee before making a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research.
- iv. If a candidature is terminated following the process outlined in Section 4.3, the candidate is not permitted to reapply for admission in accordance with the *Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure*.

5. Implementation

All applications for variation as recommended by the School or Faculty will be implemented by the GRS following approval by the Dean of Graduate Research. Candidates will be notified and variations will be updated on SiMS. HDR candidates are required to check their enrolment status and ensure that it is up to date. International candidates are required to ensure they comply with visa and/or sponsorship conditions.

Accountabilities				
Responsible Officer		Dean of Graduate Research		
Contact Officer		Director, Graduate Research School		
Supporting Information				
Legislative Compliance		This Procedure supports the University's compliance with the following legislation: Nil		
Parent Document (Policy)		Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy		
Supporting Documents				
Related Documents		• Admissions Policy • Roles and Responsibilities of Postgraduate Research Coordinators Guideline • Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy and Procedure • Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure • Health and Safety Policy • Intellectual Property Policy • Register of Delegations		
Superseded Documents		Variation of Candidature Procedure, version 2.0		
File Number		2012/04305		
Definitions and Acronyms				
Insert Term		No terms have been defined in this procedure		
Revision History				
Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	23 October 2012	23 October 2012	This is a new procedure
2.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	4 May 2017	4 May 2017	Full review
2.1	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	22 August 2017	22 August 2017	Section 4.5

Appendix A: Actions relating to variation of candidatures

Variation	Candidate or PGC	The Committee
Transfer between FT and PT enrolment	All changes are requested by candidate and recommended by PGC	Not applicable
Discontinuation at the candidate's request	Changes are typically requested by candidate and notified to the supervisor, PGC and Graduate Research School	Not applicable
Changes in research area and/or supervision	Changes are requested by candidate and recommended by PGC	Under certain circumstances, for example, where there are concerns about the ability to provide appropriate supervision or where government sanctions may apply, the Committee may be asked by the PGC to make recommendations on the requested change
Fieldwork or conducting research at a non-UNSW affiliated institution	Up to 2 semesters is recommended by the PGC	More than 2 semesters is recommended by the Committee
Approved leave	Up to 2 semesters is recommended by the PGC	More than 2 semesters is recommended by the Committee
Discontinuation of candidature when a candidature lapses	PGC recommends whether lapsed candidature notifications need to be sent to candidates. PGC recommends discontinuation of candidature where no response to the lapsed candidature notification is received	The Committee considers the candidature of the student where a response to the lapsed candidature notification is received. The Committee recommends show cause request or termination of candidature when an inadequate response is received
Extension of candidatures beyond the maximum period	PGC needs to submit to the Committee any extension request beyond 2 years for Master of Philosophy or Master by Research and beyond 4 years for Doctor of Philosophy	The Committee makes recommendations on all extensions to candidature beyond the maximum period
Transfer from one program to another within the university	PGC needs to submit to the Committee any transfer request regardless of whether it is between Schools or between Faculties	The Committee makes recommendations on all transfers