

## QAF136 HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### 1. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure describes higher degree research (HDR) principles and procedures for the Master of Research (MRes) at the Higher Education Leadership Institute (“HELI” or “the Institute”).

It defines:

- a. the responsibilities of HDR candidates (hereafter ‘candidate(s)'), staff and other persons involved in higher degree research training; and
- b. processes for the appointment of supervisors and other key matters, including the preparation, submission, and examination of the thesis component of the Master of Research.

### 2. Scope

This Policy applies to all HDR candidates (AQF Level 9 Master’s in Research), HDR supervisors, staff, thesis examiners and other persons involved in research training.

This policy does not apply to coursework programs.

### 3. Definitions

In this policy and throughout the Institute, specific terminology is used to foster a culture of clear communication and understanding when speaking and writing about all matters related to the practice of research supervision and assessment. These definitions are summarised in the following table.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Academic Board (AB)	HELI’s peak academic governance body.
Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)	A subcommittee of AB, that monitors the learning and teaching activities.
Scholarship and Research Committee (SRC)	A subcommittee of AB, that monitors the scholarship and research activities.
Research Degree Committee (RDC)	A committee which is one of the subcommittees of academic board (AB) and reports to the AB on Research process/ procedures and outcomes. Critical steps of candidacy such as the research topic, supervisory profile, students’ progression, and examination process are monitored and approved by RDC to be presented and approved by AB.
Research Unit Coordinator (RUC)	Unit Coordinator of Research Phase of Master of Research course

External examiner	An independent expert in a field of research, normally with experience of examining and supervising research at AQF levels 9 or 10.
Field of research (FOR)	Australian Bureau of Statistics classification developed for use in the measurement and analysis of research and experimental development undertaken in Australia.
Graduate Certificate in Research Methods (GCRM)	HELI's level 8 research methods qualification – an exit point from the MRes in the context of this policy.
Higher Degree Research (HDR)	Research undertaken in a course of study at AQF levels 9 (Masters Degree (Research)) or 10 (Doctorate).
HDR Coordinator	Leads HDR courses, research and administration at HELI.
HDR student	A student undertaking higher degree research enrolled in an AQF level 9 course.
Educator	An educator who is skilled in research methods, delivers <i>RES824 Designing and Communicating Research</i> , assesses HDR students' research proposals, and identifies the relevant field of research enabling the HDR Coordinator to identify and allocate supervisors.
Master of Research (MRes)	HELI's AQF level 9 Masters Degree (Research) qualification.
Supervisor	a Principal Supervisor, or Associate Supervisor.
Principal Supervisor	Is a HELI staff member and a registered supervisor of a Higher Degree by Research Candidate who is responsible and accountable for the candidate's supervision, and for the administration of supervisory process (e.g. completion and submission of progress reports, ethics application submission, nomination of examiners, etc), and who normally has the majority load of supervision;
Associate Supervisor	supervisor of a Higher Degree by Research Candidate who may or may not be a staff member or adjunct of the Institute, who has relevant expertise to the project.
Research Active	Those who have published journals/conferences papers in the last five (5) years.
Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) Ending date	The date when the confirmation of enrolment expires.
Intellectual Property	It is the legal protection of creations of the mind, such as inventions, designs, literary works, and other original outputs.

## 4. Principles

Offers of Candidature for the Master of Research will be made only to applicants who meet the Institute's admission requirements and who are deemed to have the background and abilities to indicate a reasonable expectation of success in the Master of Research Course.

HELI's Research Training framework ensures that research training is delivered, examined and awarded in accordance with the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), 2013 (second edition), [the National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Human Research](#) (revised 2025) (the National Statement), and [the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 \(the Code\)](#).

Research Training is provided in a research training environment characterised by quality supervision, and research and scholarly activity, and a culture of research excellence and integrity, respect, cultural safety, and professionalism is supported and promoted.

Diversity and academic freedom are supported.

All MRes candidates will be supported by a supervisory panel comprising two supervisors, a Principal Supervisor and Associate Supervisor(s).

A register of HDR supervisors, who are research active, will be publicly available.

Academic staff will be provided with research, scholarship, and professional development opportunities to promote research training expertise and quality.

Candidates will have access to academic and personal support services, including research skills development opportunities such as the coursework of RES821, RES822, RES823 and RES824 as well as mandatory Epigeum Research Training Course of "Research Integrity", to assist their progress and the successful completion of their studies.

Candidates must meet compulsory milestones (Milestone I and II Presentations) and conditions to fulfil their course requirements. Milestone-I Presentation is required in the second trimester of RES921 to ensure that the research topic and methodology are accurate, feasible, and ethically sound. Milestone-II Presentation is required prior to thesis submission to ensure the thesis is complete and ready for examination after the student has received constructive feedback from peers and panel members.

Milestone presentations are held in person at least four times each year, with at least two panel members attending each session to evaluate student progress. The Research Unit Coordinator is responsible for circulating the presentation outcomes to student and supervisors and monitoring any students who are identified as making poor progress.

In case any student is unable to present during the usual schedule of Milestone I and II presentations (as applicable), a supplementary presentation can be scheduled provided there are compelling or compassionate grounds for the student needing to miss the regular presentations.

## 5. Responsibilities

### 5.1 HELI's Responsibilities

HELI will:

- a. adhere to standards for admission requirements for the Master of Research course and the overall conduct of research training;
- b. ensure adequate and accurate information is provided to all Master of Research applicants prior to enrolment;
- c. ensure each candidate receives an induction and orientation, including the relevant policies governing the Master of Research and general guidance for all aspects of candidature, including the thesis preparation and examination process, and the Institute's expectations of candidates and their supervisors;
- d. ensure each supervisor has received an induction and access to copies of relevant policies and other documents governing the Master of Research and general guidance for all aspects of supervision and thesis examination, and the Institute's expectations of candidates and their supervisors;
- e. ensure all supervisors have read and are familiar with the requirements of the Threshold Standards, the AQF, [the Code](#) and [the National Statement](#);
- f. take measures to protect the IP arising from the work of candidates;
- g. ensure candidates and supervisors engage in reporting requirements;
- h. administer progress reporting requirements and monitor their effectiveness which is mostly required to be reported by principal supervisor;
- i. provide clear guidance for examiners, outlining the Institute's expectations for the Master of Research, and ensure the confidentiality of the examination process is maintained.
- j. provide research training courses for supervisors such as "Epigeum' Supervising Doctoral Studies";

## 5.2 HDR Candidates

HDR candidates are responsible for:

- a. ensuring they are aware of all necessary policies and procedures, including this Policy, the Responsible Conduct of Research Policy, HELI Student Progression Policy, [the Student Code of Conduct](#) and Disciplinary Procedures, the [AQF](#), the [Code](#) and the [National Statement](#);
- b. obtaining all necessary approvals, complying with regulatory requirements, and utilising candidate support mechanisms and resources, where required;
- c. understanding their responsibilities, including the requirements of the award and candidature, and those of their supervisors;
- d. collaborating with the supervisors to apply for approval from the HELI Research Ethics Review Committee on behalf of the research team if the research project involves human participants or sensitive data. The Principal Supervisor coordinates submission of the ethics application to the HELI Research Ethics Review Committee for projects involving human participants or sensitive data. The candidate must not commence data collection until ethics approval is granted for their specific project.;

- e. developing an overall plan for their thesis that has been discussed with and agreed to by their supervisors;
- f. discussing and agreeing with their supervisors the schedule and mode of meetings, timetables for submission of written work and prescribed presentations, and feedback timelines;
- g. maintaining regular contact with their supervisors and indicating their successful progression (according to HELI Student Progression Policy);
- h. ongoing development and implementation of their research project with their supervisors and successfully completing mutually agreed and planned research tasks aligned with the study period and Confirmation of Enrolment ending date;
- i. discussing with supervisors proposed changes to candidature, planned leave or other absences that may impact on their progress, and how these matters will be managed;
- j. discussing with their supervisors any additional skills and/or knowledge needed to complete the project and working with supervisors to devise agreed strategies and mechanisms to address those needs;
- k. all final decisions about the research project;
- l. planning and executing the thesis to enable submission at least 6 weeks prior to their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) end date, or 1 week prior with Research Unit Coordinator approval in exceptional circumstances. Candidates requiring CoE extension beyond the standard 24-month study period due to late thesis submission must provide documented justification and will incur pro rata tuition fees for the extension period.
- m. providing regular advice on the progress of their research project to their supervisors, including writing the thesis and regularly sharing draft material;
- n. participating the compulsory Milestone-I and II Presentations (in the Second and last trimester of RES921, respectively).
- o. Completing the mandatory research integrity course on Epigeum as provided by HELI.
- p. attending compulsory workshops, research meetups, researcher technique sessions, research training sessions and academic support/library research sessions as and when scheduled by the Institute. Attendance at these sessions is in addition to the Epigeum Research Integrity course and supports research skill development.
- q. notifying the Research Unit Coordinator and/or the Dean if there is a risk of the candidate-supervisor relationship breaking down;
- r. preparation and presentation of a final draft of the entire thesis for review by supervisors before the examination process;
- s. the preparation and submission of the thesis in a form suitable format for examination.
- t. Amending the thesis according to the examination outcome by external examiner(s) and satisfy the supervisor(s), examiner (if applicable) and RDC (if applicable);

- u. providing the students' feedback through Unit Evaluation Questionnaire (UEQ) for RES921.

### 5.3 Supervisors

Below are the primary responsibilities of a Principal Supervisor.

All or some of these responsibilities, or aspects of them, will be shared with other members of the supervisory team and will be documented by a signed agreement with the candidate.

Primary supervisors are responsible for:

- a. ensuring communications between all members of the supervisory team and the candidate are coordinated and timely;
- b. ensuring the level of involvement of other supervisors is determined and documented in conjunction with the candidate;
- c. supervising the execution of the candidate's research project through regular contact and providing expert advice on the field of research ([FoR 2020](#)), research methods, research execution, and writing the thesis;
- d. discussing and agreeing with the candidate on the schedule and mode of meetings, timetables for submission of written work and prescribed presentations, and timelines for providing feedback;
- e. ensuring they are available for private consultations of sufficient time with the candidate and other supervisors no less than once a fortnight (if full-time) across an academic year, or more frequently, where necessary.
- f. planning and developing the research project with the candidate, including:
  - i. evaluating the feasibility of the proposed research topic, aims, questions, approaches and methods, analytical tools, milestones, and timelines,
  - ii. assisting the candidate to develop the research framework, and apply for Research Ethics Review if research project involves human participants or sensitive data,
  - iii. consideration of the nature and significance of the research, including its originality, and novelty (if required)
  - iv. ensuring the scope of the research is appropriate,
  - v. ensuring that adequate resources are available to support the completion of the project in a timely manner,
  - vi. supporting the candidate in building or establishing external relationships, where necessary to support the research,
  - vii. providing written feedback on draft materials within agreed and documented timelines;
- g. assisting the candidate by identifying any additional skills and knowledge needed to complete the project and devise agreed strategies and mechanisms to address those needs;

- h. ensuring the candidate is aware of all necessary policies and procedures (including updates to policies and procedures), obtains all necessary approvals, and complies with regulatory requirements;
- i. ensuring the candidate is aware of all candidate support mechanisms and resources;
- j. discussing with the candidate planned leave or other absences that may impact on the candidate's supervision, and how these will be managed successfully, and where necessary deciding on interim supervision;
- k. remaining research-active and supporting a quality research culture;
- l. providing regular advice on progress of the candidate's research and thesis to the RUC at the end of each term (except the term in which the project is to be submitted) and notifying the Institute's Dean in writing of any continuing concerns or problems;
- m. notifying the RUC and/or Dean if there is a risk of the candidate-supervisor relationship breaking down;
- n. reviewing drafts of the thesis and ensuring that the thesis is in a format suitable for examination and that the candidate has followed all the procedures required for the thesis submission, before proceeding with a formal "Intention to Submit the Thesis";
- o. recommending suitable independent external examiners to examine the thesis to the *Research Unit Coordinator*;
- p. ensuring that the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(the Code\)](#) is followed in all matters of authorship pertaining to publications arising from the candidacy.
- q. Completing the Research Training Course of "Epigeum Supervising Doctoral Studies"

#### **5.4 External Examiners**

External examiners are responsible for providing a fair, independent and expert thesis examination report to the RC.

#### **6. Appointment of Supervisors**

At the commencement and for the duration of their candidature, every candidate will have a supervisory team.

Master of Research thesis projects are supervised by a panel of at least two supervisors, appointed by the RDC:

- A HELI affiliated principal supervisor who holds a doctoral degree, or has equivalent research experience, and who is active in research and publishing in, or otherwise making original contributions to, a relevant field of research;
- At least one associate supervisor with relevant research or disciplinary expertise.

#### **Principal Supervisor**

- a. The Principal Supervisor must have relevant knowledge, expertise, and interest in the candidate's research topic.
- b. The Principal Supervisor must have a successful record of supervision, including evidence of at least one successful completion in the past five years of a HDR award recognised by HELI.

**Associate Supervisor:** Supervisors without relevant supervisory experience, including no evidence of at least one successful completion in the past five years, may only be appointed as an associate supervisor.

A Master of Research *Supervisor Register* of staff eligible to be a Principal or Associate Supervisor will be maintained by the RUC *and* approved by the RDC. Supervisors may be added to the register on an ad hoc basis subject to the approval of the RDC.

Where the candidate is an international candidate, at least one supervisor will be located at the campus where the candidate is undertaking the majority of their study.

Supervisors will not normally supervise any more than six full-time or part-time candidates at any one time.

No supervisor may accept new supervision responsibilities if they are Principal Supervisor of two or more currently enrolled candidates who have not submitted their theses by the date of maximum candidature duration, unless approved by the RDC.

A supervisory team may include more than one Associate Supervisor. Any additional Associate Supervisors may be appointed by the RDC based on their relevant experience or expertise .

## 7. Intellectual Property

Intellectual property (IP) refers to legal rights in creations of the mind, including inventions, designs, literary works and other research outputs. IP is recognised in law as a form of property and may be assigned, licensed, protected and enforced.

Subject to any agreement to the contrary, and provided the candidate is not an employee of the Institute, the candidate will generally own the IP they create or have a claim to ownership of IP they contribute to creating. The candidate's precise IP rights will depend on the nature, extent and value of their contribution to the research project, and the nature, extent and value of any other IP inputs to the project. The candidate and their supervisors must also comply with any relevant third-party IP arrangements.

Where IP has commercial potential, its ownership and management require particular care. Shared ownership of IP can complicate, delay or impede commercialisation. Where IP is created during a research project with commercial potential, Institute policies should:

- a. avoid impediments to commercialisation arising from shared ownership of IP;
- b. ensure the Institute can meet its contractual obligations to any third-party funder;
- c. ensure that applicable processes are fair to all parties; and
- d. provide for appropriate financial or other rewards that reflect contributions made.

However, these policies must not:

- a. prejudice the candidate's ability to submit a thesis for examination; or
- b. prejudice the candidate's ability to publish in a managed way.

To accommodate these requirements, when enrolled as an HDR candidate at HELI, the Institute requires candidates to own any commercialisable IP created during their candidature. The Institute makes no claim to the candidate's copyright in their thesis, or in any articles or other works written for publication, and does not claim ownership of non-commercialisable IP.

If a candidate does not wish to agree to Institute ownership of commercialisable IP, or does not wish to benefit financially from successful commercialisation, this will not prevent enrolment. However, the candidate and their supervisor will need to agree on a project in which the creation of commercialisable IP is unlikely. If the Institute does not pursue commercialisation within a reasonable time, ownership of the IP will revert to the candidate who created it.

Where jointly owned IP is successfully commercialised, the candidate will, together with other contributors, share in any financial or equity returns. The candidate will be treated in the same manner as academic staff in this regard.

## **8. Changes in Topic or Supervision**

To make a major change to an approved thesis topic or to change supervisor during their research project, it is essential that candidates obtain the approval of the RDC after consultation with their supervisors.

If a supervisor resigns or is otherwise unable to fulfil their role during a candidate's research project, RDC must appoint a suitable replacement supervisor.

## **9. Preparation of the Thesis**

A candidate's thesis must be written in Australian English.

As the first draft of the thesis is written, completed sections should be presented to supervisors and be fit for critical comment. The supervisors will review these sections carefully and critically and they will be returned within a reasonable time (agreed with the supervisor but not normally more than 10 working days). Comment will mostly be about the substance of the research and the overall organisation and development of ideas.

Candidates are expected to present the draft in a form that is readable by their supervisor. Written expression is an important skill and is a reasonable expectation of the candidate.

A Master of Research Thesis will be in the range of 25,000 - 30,000 words, excluding references and appendices.

The thesis must be presented in the manner specified in the *Guidelines to Preparation of the Master of Research Thesis*.

Raw data on which the research is based may be included in the thesis, usually in appendices. Alternatively, the data may be stored by HELI in electronic form.

In some cases, where the research involves human subjects, the data must be stored confidentially and must be destroyed after a specified period. In other cases, the data may be made available on request to those who read the thesis.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to publish the results of their research. It is essential that there is full discussion with the supervisor concerning authorship, choice of journal and timing of publication. In all cases, candidate and supervisors are required to follow the guidance in *Authorship: a Guide Supporting the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(NHMRC, 2018\)](#)* and complete an [Authorship Agreement](#).

Papers may be published (or accepted for publication) before the thesis is completed. Where appropriate, a published (or accepted) paper may form a chapter in the body of the thesis, provided that the candidate is the lead author of the paper, that they conducted the experimental or field work and most of the writing process, and that the paper follows the style of other chapters and is integrated with the rest of the thesis in a general discussion.

## 10. Copy-Editing

The writing of a thesis involves input from both candidate and supervisors, but each has a different role.

The supervisors will provide critical comment and guidance. This guidance, particularly at the first draft stage, is likely to include detailed advice on aspects such as overall organisation and the development of argument, aspects, which professional editors call 'substantive editing'.

Candidates, however, are ultimately responsible for writing the thesis. This requires a high level of expertise in academic writing and English language.

Supervisors are not responsible for copy editing the thesis.

Candidates should make all efforts to improve their writing and English language skills during the research writing process, including making use of the education and support in academic writing available through HELI.

It is not considered usual practice at HELI for candidates to have professional or third-party assistance in editing their theses. However, in some circumstances, the supervisors may recommend that the final draft of the thesis is copy-edited by a third party.

Candidates may utilise artificial intelligence (AI) software and tools in research processes and thesis preparation, if usage is transparently acknowledged in the thesis (e.g., methodology, acknowledgements, or a dedicated section), specifying the tools employed, their purpose (such as data analysis, drafting, or editing), and the extent of involvement. AI use must be ethical and responsible, aligning with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(NHMRC, 2018\)](#), [HELI's Breaches of Research Integrity Procedure](#), and principles of academic honesty. This includes avoiding misrepresentation of AI-generated content as the candidate's original work, ensuring AI does not compromise research originality, validity, or integrity, verifying outputs for accuracy, bias, and plagiarism using tools like Turnitin, and obtaining supervisor approval for substantive applications. Supervisors must guide candidates on appropriate AI use and confirm compliance prior to thesis submission. Any breach may constitute research misconduct, subject to investigation under HELI's procedures.

If a thesis is to be copy-edited:

- a. the principal supervisor must give “permission to submit” in writing;
- b. the editor must be approved by the *Research Unit Coordinator*;
- c. the copy editing must be acknowledged in the thesis.

Copy-editing involves correcting errors of grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling, and ensuring consistency of style.

Copy-editing does not include correcting substantive errors of content, structure, language and style.

## **11. Submission**

A candidate will, through the Principal Supervisor, give the RUC three months' written notice of a candidate's intention to submit a thesis.

To be eligible to submit their thesis for examination, candidates must have:

- a. been enrolled for at least the minimum duration of candidature;
- b. successfully completed all prescribed coursework components of the program, or received an exemption (Recognition of Prior Learning - RPL) from the component/s;
- c. successfully completed all compulsory progress and other requirements such as *Epigeum Research Training Course* and Research Ethics Review Committee approval (if needed);
- d. a current enrolment and demonstrated active candidature;
- e. successfully completed research to the standard and specification of the program in accordance with the AQF;
- f. approval to submit for examination from their Principal Supervisor and RUC;
- g. made oral presentations (Milestone-I and II Presentations) of their research and thesis summary to HELI's research community.

A candidate will present a thesis for examination at least two months prior to their maximum duration of candidature.

The RUC may approve an extension of time for submission, but only in special circumstances.

The thesis must comply with the Institute's policies and procedures.

Candidates are required to make a declaration of originality in the body of the thesis and will be required to submit the thesis electronically through anti-plagiarism software such as Turnitin prior to submission and provide the report to their supervisors.

Candidates must maintain their research ethics approval until they have received confirmation that they have passed.

Candidates are required, in the body of the thesis, to acknowledge the affiliation of the student (Higher Education Leadership Institute, Education Centre of Australia Higher HE),

external contributions, including substantive input such as joint authorship and significant contributions of intellectual property (e.g., research and resource contributions from third parties, assistance from external authorities in the discipline, and copy editing. Details of the contribution, including the name of the contributor and its description should be included in the acknowledgements section of the thesis.

A candidate will submit with, but separately from, the thesis, a short abstract of the thesis of not more than 400 words and written in a form suitable for publication.

Any work or material which has previously been accepted for a degree or similar award may not be submitted by a candidate as the main content of their thesis, but will not be precluded from being incorporated into their thesis, provided that the candidate indicates, generally in the preface and specifically in the notes, the work or material that has been incorporated.

Prior to submission, the *Principal Supervisor* and the *RUC* will check that the thesis is correctly laid out and appears to be within the word limit appropriate to the course of study. If either condition is not met, the candidate and supervisor will be notified, and the candidate will be required to amend the thesis so that it meets the requirements. The amended thesis will then be resubmitted.

When the thesis is completed and approval to submit has been given, an electronic Word version must be submitted through the Canvas module for RES921 Research Project, which will then be forwarded to the RDC.

If the *Principal Supervisor* declines to certify in writing that the thesis meets all the preparation requirements, a candidate may submit a thesis for examination against the advice of the *Principal Supervisor*, to the RDC. The RDC will receive and review the submission and notify the candidate, the *Principal Supervisor* and the *RUC* of the outcome of its decision whether the thesis may be sent for examination. Please refer to Section 12, Examination.

The content of a thesis will remain confidential during the Examination period.

HELI reserves the right to request examiners to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement if deemed necessary.

The identity of examiners will not be revealed to Candidates until the Examination process has been completed and then only if an examiner agrees to being identified.

## **12. Examination**

Three (3) months before the thesis submission date, the candidate and the supervisors will discuss possible examiners.

More than two months before the thesis submission date, three to four independent external examiners identified will be approached informally by the *Principal Supervisor* who will seek their agreement to examine the thesis.

At least two months before the thesis submission date, the *Principal Supervisor* will nominate 3-4 independent examiners to the RUC.

External examiners are expected to be independent and expert in the field of research of the thesis.

An independent examiner is one who:

- a. has not had an employment relationship with the Institute within the last three years;
- b. has not had a business relationship or other material contractual relationship with the Institute within the last three years, other than for the examination of research degrees or as an assessment moderator;
- c. does not have a direct or indirect material personal or financial interest with the Institute or in the outcome of the research project;
- d. is sufficiently impartial and disconnected from the Institute's operations, such that they are able to impartially assess a thesis;
- e. is free of any interest, position, association, or relationship that might influence, or reasonably be perceived to influence, their capacity to exercise independent judgement;
- f. has not been an HDR candidate under the supervision of any member of the supervising panel;
- g. has not been co-author or co-editor of publications nor collaborated in research with the candidate;
- h. has not been co-author or co-editor of publications with any of the supervising panel within the last five years;
- i. must not have had any significant communication with the candidate during their candidature;
- j. after official appointment as an examiner, does not have communication with the supervisor or candidate.

An expert examiner:

- a. has a doctorate or equivalent research experience in the requisite field;
- b. is (or in the last five years has been) researching in the field of research (FoR) of the thesis or in a related field;
- c. has experience of research supervision.

At least one of the examiners will have experience of research thesis assessment. At least one of the examiners will normally be based in Australia.

Candidates may request the exclusion of specific individuals as their examiners at least three months prior to submission of the thesis.

The RUC will inform the Principal Supervisor and the Associate Supervisor when the examiner nominations have been approved.

Candidates must not be told the names of their examiners except where their examination includes an oral presentation or performance in the presence of the examiners.

Once they have given in principle agreement to examine the thesis, the supervisor proposes their appointment to the RUC using an *HDR External Examiner Nomination Form*. The RUC will present the nominations to the RDC for approval.

Where one or more proposed examiners is rejected, the Principal Supervisor will be asked to seek one or more alternates.

The RDC will appoint two independent, qualified, research-active examiners with international expertise in the discipline/s being examined. A reserve examiner will also be appointed. A delegate of RDC will formally invite the examiners to examine the thesis by email.

The identity of examiners approved by the RDC must remain confidential.

A candidate must not attempt to identify or communicate with any examiner or potential examiner of their thesis, either before or during the examination process.

Once the examiner is appointed, Supervisors must not communicate with the examiners.

Individual examiners must not communicate with each other, about any aspect of the examination during the examination process.

In cases where a confidentiality agreement is required, the RDC will prepare and arrange execution of an examiner's confidentiality agreement prior to their commencing the examination. If an examiner is unable or unwilling to sign the deed, the reserve examiner will examine the thesis, and another reserve examiner will be appointed.

The thesis is disseminated to examiners electronically, which may be via a digital repository.

Only the Chair of RDC or nominee may communicate with examiners on behalf of the Institute while the thesis is under examination.

If an examiner attempts to make contact, individuals must not engage and immediately notify the Chair, RDC.

The examiners' identities must not be disclosed to the candidate until after the examination process has been completed, and only with permission of the examiner.

### **13. Examinations Outcomes**

Examiners are given six weeks to examine a thesis, however, earlier submission of examination outcome will also be possible.

In reporting on the thesis to the RDC, the external examiners will complete a *HDR Examination Report Form*, that summarises the thesis information and their recommendation and includes a detailed examination report against the criteria specified in the Template.

Examiners must provide HELI with a report on the prescribed form with the recommendation for one of the following Examination outcomes:

- a. *Pass* - that the thesis/project be accepted without revision; or
- b. *Pass with Minor Amendments* - that the thesis be accepted subject to minor amendments as specified, to be done to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor. The thesis will meet the required standard for the award of the MRes degree on completion of the recommended amendments to the satisfaction of the candidate's

Principal Supervisor, before being deposited in the ECA HE Library. Such a thesis may contain minor errors, the sum of which do not detract from its overall quality to such an extent that it requires corrections to be made; or

- c. *Pass with Major Amendments* - that the thesis be accepted subject to major amendments as specified, to be done to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor and the RDC; or
- d. *Revise and Resubmit for Re-examination* - that the Candidate be required to undertake substantial revisions to the thesis and that the thesis be re-submitted for Examination. That the thesis does not meet the required standards for the award of the MRes degree but has sufficient merit that the required standard may be met following further research, reanalysis of data or synthesis of information, or any combination thereof. The thesis will be resubmitted and sent for further examination by the examiner(s) that determined this outcome, unless an examiner declines and the reserve examiner is appointed by RDC.
- e. *Fail* - that the thesis/project be rejected. The Candidate is not permitted to re-submit it for Examination. Students in HELI's Master of Research (MRes) who fail the thesis examination may apply for an exit award: Graduate Certificate in Research Methods (GCRM). This provides recognition for completed research training components despite not meeting full MRes requirements.

Examiners:

- a. where they recommend "Pass", must justify their recommendation;
- b. where they recommend "Amendments Required", must justify their recommendation and clearly specify the amendments;
- c. where they recommend "Revise and Resubmit", must justify their recommendation and clearly specify the changes;
- d. where they recommend "Fail" must justify their recommendation.

Examiners are encouraged to be as detailed and as expansive as time permits.

Examiners' reports are important and valuable academic and professional feedback for the candidate and the Institute, they are documented by HELI under a confidential database.

Examiners' reports are also to used internally to inform quality assurance and quality management processes for the Master of Research.

All examiners have the option to remain anonymous.

The examiners' reports are provided to the candidate and the principal supervisor.

The Candidate and the *Principal Supervisor* will prepare a response to the examiners' reports and submit the response to the RUC and the RDC.

The RDC will review examiner reports and Principal Supervisor's commentary. If the response is insufficient, the RDC request further information from them. The RDC will report to the AB on appointment of the examiner and the examination outcome.

**The RDC will:**

- a. recommend to Academic Board the award of the degree;

- b. require that corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the principal supervisor and RDC (except “Pass” or “Pass with minor amendments” which do not need RDC review) be carried out by the candidate before the award of the degree;
- c. require that corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the RDC be carried out by the candidate before the award of the degree;
- d. require that the candidate undertakes further study and research, and resubmits the thesis for re-examination by one or more examiners;
- e. in the event of substantial disagreement amongst examiners, appoint a further examiner, moderator or adjudicator;
- f. recommend to Academic Board that the degree be not awarded; or
- g. take other such action as it deems appropriate.

Where both examiners recommend “Fail” the RUC will summarise the examiner’s reports and recommend to RDC that the candidate be confirmed as failed but recommend the award of Graduate Certificate in Research Methods (GCRM).

In the case of a substantial disagreement between examiners:

- a. In the event that examiners are not unanimous in making any one of the recommendations above, and their recommendations are at least two levels apart, the Principal Supervisor and the Candidate will be provided with copies of the examiners' reports and will be invited to comment. In this process, the examiners' identities are not revealed to the Candidate.
- b. The RDC will then consider all the documentation presented and recommend an Examination outcome or recommend that a third examiner be appointed.
- c. Where a third examiner is appointed, the examiner will independently examine the thesis/and provide a recommended result. The RDC will consider all three examiners' reports, together with the Candidate and Supervisor response to the initial examiners and recommend an Examination outcome.

Where a replacement examiner is appointed, any report received from the examiner who has been replaced will not be considered.

If an examiner or any other party raises concerns about the integrity of the research during the examination process, the RDC will suspend the examination and notify the examiners, school and the candidate until a determination has been reached.

In the event that an allegation of academic dishonesty has been made at any time during the Examination process, the [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#) applies.

#### **14. Revisions and Thesis Resubmission**

If the result of the examination is to require the candidate to revise and re-submit their thesis, the candidate will be given a submission date for the revised thesis that will depend on the extent of the revision needed.

Candidates are expected to enrol and register and pay pro rata tuition fees during the revision period. If the candidate is an international candidate who has returned home, offshore and international fees will apply.

Where revisions are required, the Candidate will be asked to undertake the revisions in the following timeframes:

- (a) Minor revisions – 2 months
- (b) Major revisions – 3 months
- (c) Resubmit for Examination – 6 months.

If a candidate does not resubmit within these timeframes, they will be awarded a 'Fail', but be recommended for the award of Graduate Certificate in Research Methods (GCRM).

International candidates who receive a 'Revise and Resubmit' classification should not be required to remain in Australia to complete revisions for re-examination.

Candidates may apply in writing for an extension on these timelines to the RUC at least fourteen business days prior to the due date. Applications for extension must be accompanied by a letter of endorsement from the Principal Supervisor.

Where a candidate is required to 'Revise and Resubmit' for re-examination, they have one opportunity to ensure the thesis or dissertation meets the requirements for the award of the degree on second examination.

A re-examination is undertaken with the original examiners, if they are willing and available to re-examine the revised submission, or if unavailable, with replacement examiners such that the revised work still receives assessment from two independent, external experts.

All material submitted and recommendations made in the context of a re-examination supersedes all previous material and recommendations, with the exception of the candidate's response to the examiners' remarks provided in the initial examination.

Resubmitting candidates must include a list of requested amendments with the revised thesis. This list must include justification for any amendments not made.

The original and any replacement examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis are provided with:

- a. the revised thesis;
- b. the candidate's response to examiners' reports, listing the amendments made to address the initial examiners' requirements and justification for any amendments not made at the request of those examiners; and
- c. the de-identified co-examiners' reports to determine if the required amendments and revisions have been made.

Examiners of a revised and re-submitted thesis must provide a recommendation of 'Pass' (with or without amendments) or a 'Fail'.

Where two examiners examine a re-submitted thesis and their recommendations diverge, a third examiner is appointed by RDC. The third examiner must examine the submission independently and must not be provided with the reports of their co-examiners.

The final classification of the examination is determined in accordance with the majority recommendation of the examiners.

The result of the re-examination is final.

## **15. Release of Examiners' Reports**

Under normal circumstances, candidates are entitled to copies of all examiners' reports and comments once the examination is complete. If candidates are asked to revise and resubmit, they will receive copies of all reports to enable the revision to be done.

If a dispute occurs during the examination process, release of the reports cannot be made until the examination of the thesis is complete.

If candidates are asked to revise and resubmit, they will receive copies of all reports to enable the revision to be done. Candidates may not, however, see any of the reports while the thesis is still under examination.

## **16. Candidate Award Conferral and Record Keeping**

### **16.1 Certification of the Award**

Candidate conferral will be conducted in accordance with [HELI's Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure](#).

When the award is approved by the Academic Board, HELI will provide a letter to the candidate advising them they may now start using their post nominal, notify the candidate of the degree conferral procedures.

### **16.2 Final Corrections, Records, and Deposit in the ECA HE Library**

If the Academic Board approves the award of Master of Research, the RUC will deposit an electronic "PDF" copy of the thesis in the ECA HE Library database. Students sign a consent form allowing the final version of their thesis to be made available worldwide through HELI's Digital Repository on ECA HE Library website, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo period.

If the Academic Board approves the award of Graduate Certificate in Research Methods only, the thesis will not be deposited in the ECA HE Library.

Copies of the theses/projects will also be sent by the Candidate to each supervisor.

## **17. Grievances**

In most cases, HDR studies are fruitful and rewarding. Nevertheless, challenges arise from time to time and it is important to actively resolve them.

In the first instance, candidates should discuss any difficulties with their supervisor.

However, if this is not appropriate or satisfactory (e.g., where the problem relates to the supervisor or examination) candidates should contact the Dean. These discussions are always confidential.

Should these further discussions not resolve the issue, HELI's *Candidate Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure* should be followed.

Grievances related to responsible Research conduct, must refer to the *Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and Procedure*.

## **18. Monitoring and Review**

Academic Board is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the quality enhancement and review of research training.

RDC is responsible for monitoring and reporting and overseeing the HDR quality and performance against the Institutes key performance indicators.

RDC and the Dean are responsible for providing academic leadership pursuant to quality enhancement, and the avoidance of conflict of interest and institutional and academic risk in the delivery of research training.

## **19. Related Documents**

- a. QAF005 Academic Freedom, Integrity and Freedom of Inquiry Policy.
- b. QAF075 Candidate Assessment Policy and Procedure
- c. QAF090 Candidate Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure
- d. QAF135 Responsible Conduct of Research Policy
- e. FRM506 HDR Examination Report Form.
- f. FRM505 HDR External Examiner Nomination Form
- g. HDR Candidate Progress Report
- h. FRM503 HDR Supervisors Register
- i. FRM504 Authorship Agreement
- j. QAF045 Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure
- k. QAF090 Candidate Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure

## **20. References**

1. NHMRC. (2019). *Authorship: a Guide Supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*. National Health and Medical Research Council
2. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 (the 2018 Code)
3. National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025)
4. Australian Qualification Framework

## 21. Version History

<b>Document ID</b>	<b>QAF136 Higher Degree Research Policy and Procedure</b>
<b>Category</b>	Academic
<b>Document Owner</b>	Dean
<b>Approved by</b>	Academic Board

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	24 November 2021	Document creation and initial approval
1.1	Dean	10 February 2022	Amendment to number of supervisor ensuring HELI meets the requirements of the HESF 2021.
1.2	Dean	29 March 2022	Amendments to remove Graduate Diploma in Research Methods.
1.3	Dean	29 April 2022	Addition of appendix defining active scholarship and research.
2.0	Academic Board	7 March 2024	<p>The substantially revised Policy contains many essential improvements, including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight by the RDC - Research Degrees Committee, to be established as a Standing Committee and reporting to the Academic Board, separate from the Research and Scholarship Committee (More on this at the meeting);</li> <li>• More specific information, including principles, responsibilities of HELI, responsibilities of students and supervisors, and timelines on submission, examination of the thesis and thesis revisions essential for timely completions;</li> <li>• Changes to specifications for appointment of examiners, decisions relating to examiners' reports, and greater academic</li> </ul>

			<p>governance oversight of the examination process and outcomes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor amendments to existing elements such as IP.</li> </ul>
3	Dean, Scholarship and Research	5 May 2026	<p>The substantially revised Procedural aspects of the policy contain many essential improvements, including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• including supervision responsibilities (fortnightly meetings, ethics applications by Principal Supervisor),</li> <li>• candidate obligations (Milestone Presentations, Epigeum training, thesis amendments),</li> <li>• AI usage guidelines (ethical acknowledgment required), and</li> <li>• exit awards (GCRM for failed theses).</li> </ul> <p>These align with HESF 2021 and Australian norms for robust governance and completions.</p>