

PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION FOR HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH

Higher degree study is a major commitment so right from the start we would like to help you clarify your research plans before you complete your formal application.

1. It is important to find out whether there is a potential supervisor in the Faculty with expertise in the field you are interested in. Look at the website <http://www.uow.edu.au/educ/postgrad/index.html> or contact the Director of Postgraduate Research, Dr Honglin Chen. The person you initially discuss your ideas with (your academic advisor) may or may not eventually become your supervisor.
2. When you make your application, you will be asked to provide information about your area of research interest. This will not be your final, formal proposal – in the first few months of your candidature you will be guided to develop and present your proposal to a panel. At this stage, however, you need to show that you have put some thought into what you would like to research:
 - read journal articles or conference programs in the field to get an idea of key issues;
 - talk with colleagues and other students about their experiences and concerns;
 - draw on your own experience to identify some issues;
 - attend some conferences or workshops or presentations of work-in-progress by other students;
 - undertake/audit some coursework if you feel you need further background in the field.
3. As you do your investigations, take note of such things as how others have described their research: the aims of the project, the research questions, the methods they have used, the findings, and so on. Think about the areas in which you might research, eg: curriculum, teaching methods, learning, assessment, policy, technology, teaching resources, socio-cultural issues, psychology of education, leadership.
4. When you contact your academic advisor, provide him or her with information about your background, eg:
 - what studies have you done previously? Have you taken any subjects in research methodology?
 - have you undertaken any research? If so, at what level? (eg minor project, major dissertation, honours degree). What was the topic?
 - have you had teaching experience? For how long? In what area?
5. If you are already quite clear about your research topic, send your academic advisor a draft of your proposal (see Research Proposal Guidelines). If you are not yet clear, let your academic advisor know that you would like some guidance. Perhaps send him/her a list of a few topics that you would be interested in or ask for some indication of current areas in need of research.
6. The proposal you include in your application will provide evidence of your ability to start thinking like a researcher in identifying a relevant research topic and developing a research plan. If your application is approved, you might find that over the following months, your research topic could change – either completely or in small details.

Entry to research programs is very competitive. The more thought you put into your project at this stage, the more likely are your chances of being accepted.