



## Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students

# First Year Research Proposal Review Guidelines

## 1. Overview

As part of their responsibilities to Higher Degree Research (HDR) students outlined in the Code of Practice (Supervision), academic units are expected to establish procedures for a formal review of the candidate's research proposal no later than one year after first enrolment in their thesis subject (for doctoral and masters by research, both full-time and part-time). This research proposal review is an important step in ensuring that the research project is based on a strong academic footing, that the student has the skills required to complete the project at the required standard, that the supervisory arrangements are appropriate to the project, and that the project can be undertaken adequately with the resources available.

The details of the Research Proposal Review should meet Faculty Guidelines and must include: an oral research presentation, preparation of a written research plan and preliminary literature review, a timetable for the coming year, and a statement of the resources required to complete the project. A research Proposal Review Committee, having attended the seminar and considered the documentation, will make recommendations concerning the full proposal, which will be given to the student, with copies forwarded to the Research Student Centre (RSC) for inclusion in the student's file.

## 2. Research Proposal Review Procedures

Students must present an oral research presentation and prepare a written research plan and preliminary literature review, written according to the discipline conventions of the degree undertaken and as prescribed by the relevant Faculty Guidelines. Students must also provide a written timetable for the coming year, and a statement of the resources required to complete the project (e.g. access to laboratories, field trips, libraries, specialist equipment etc). The written research plan, literature review, timeline and statement of resource requirements must be provided to the Research Proposal Review Committee prior to the Committee meeting to review the student's proposal.

The presentation must be made before a Research Proposal Review Committee. Faculty Guidelines define the composition of Research Proposal Review Committees for each Faculty: each Committee consists, minimally, of the supervisor(s), two appropriate members of academic staff capable of assessing the research proposal, and a postgraduate research student representative as observer. Where appropriate, given the research project, a person external to the academic or research unit may be nominated to the Committee. The Research Proposal Review Committee will consider the research presentation and written material prepared for the Research Proposal Review. The Committee will have an opportunity to ask questions of the student about the research proposal and seminar, and the student will have the opportunity to address the Committee directly.

The following areas should be considered as part of the Research Proposal Review:

- **Research Presentation:** The candidate must deliver a presentation that outlines the research question, aims, significance, approach and originality of the project. The scope of the research should be appropriate for the degree, keeping in mind the possibility of subsequent Masters by Research transfer to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The presentation allows the Research Proposal Review Committee to assess the candidate's capacity to clearly articulate their research question, to explain the significance of the research, to explain how they will do the research, and to respond to questions about their research.
- **Research Plan:** This should provide more detailed information than the seminar and include information about the project's background, how it will be approached (e.g. hypothesis, experimental design, methods, theoretical approach, etc as applicable), outline of the thesis chapters and draft timelines for completion of the project. In addition, it should identify any ethical, IP and safety issues relevant to the project and how these will be addressed, and any potential problems likely to impede progress and suggest solutions to these problems.
- **Preliminary Literature Review:** This literature review should demonstrate that the candidate has a good knowledge of the field of the research project including the published findings of other researchers and the areas requiring original research.
- **Statement of the resources required to complete the project:** This statement should identify any materials, training, travel or access to infrastructure required to expedite completion of the project. In particular students should identify any changes in resource or infrastructure needs beyond those identified in the "Commencement of Candidature Form" completed at the first formal meeting between the student and their supervisor(s). Students should also identify any training, expert assistance or specialist library resources required for completion of the project.

The Committee will have the opportunity to ask further questions of the student and their supervisor concerning the appropriateness of the research project for the degree, standard of the research plan, adequacy of resources available for the project and appropriateness of existing supervisory arrangements for completion of the project and will make recommendations on the basis of these considerations.

A copy of the student's written research proposal should be kept in the relevant Faculty. The Research Proposal Review Form that contains the recommendations of the Research Proposal Review Committee (see Appendix 1 attached to this document) must be lodged with the Research Student Centre (RSC) and placed on the student's file, a copy should also be kept in the relevant Faculty.

### **3. Review Committee Recommendations**

The Research Proposal Review Committee will complete the Research Proposal Review Form (Appendix 1).

The review documentation, should describe *specific* areas in which progress is satisfactory or unsatisfactory, making recommendations for improvement, where appropriate, and identifying future direction for the candidate. Results of the review assessment should be communicated in writing to the student by the academic unit as soon as possible *after* the review, at which point the student will be asked to sign a copy of the Research Proposal Review Form to acknowledge receipt. This documentation should also be included with the Research Proposal Review Form that is forwarded to the Research Student Centre (RSC), with a copy kept in the Faculty.

If the Research Proposal Review Committee determines that the student's research proposal is unacceptable, the Committee shall explain what aspects of the proposal were inadequate, and the student will normally be required to re-present a research proposal within three months. If, after the second presentation of the research proposal, the Research Proposal Review Committee determines that the proposal is unsatisfactory, the Committee may make a recommendation to the Dean concerning the student's continued candidature.

### **4. Appeal Procedures**

Students may appeal against the Research Proposal Review Committee decision under criteria noted in the Code of Practice - Supervision and the HDR Course Rules.

## Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students

### FIRST YEAR RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW CHECKLIST\*

*To be*

*completed within 12 months of starting candidature.*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Candidature Commencement Date:</b> ...../..../..... | <b>Date of Review:</b> ...../...../..... |
|--|--|

| 1. Candidate Details                   |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>                           | <b>Student No:</b> |
| <b>Academic Unit:</b>                  |                    |
| <b>Principal Supervisor:</b>           |                    |
| <b>Co-Supervisor (if any):</b>         |                    |
| <b>Other Review Committee Members:</b> |                    |
| <b>Title of Thesis/Topic:</b>          |                    |

| 2. Research Presentation  | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| <b>Research question and scope appropriate to the degree</b>                  |     |    |
| <b>Standard of presentation acceptable</b>                                    |     |    |
| <b>Comments</b>   |     |    |
|   |     |    |
| 3. Literature Review  | YES | NO |
| <b>Preliminary Literature Review Completed</b>                                |     |    |
| <b>Literature review demonstrates adequate understanding of research area</b> |     |    |
| <b>Comments</b>   |     |    |
|   |     |    |

| <b>4. Research Plan</b>  |  | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|--|--|------------|-----------|
| Research design and methods appropriate to the project   |  |            |           |
| Candidate displays sound knowledge of field of Research  |  |            |           |
| Draft thesis outline appropriate, given the stage of research  |  |            |           |
| Draft Timelines appropriate and achievable   |  |            |           |
| Ethical, IP and/or Safety issues   |  |            |           |
| <b>Comments</b>  |  |            |           |
| <p><b>5. Overall Research Proposal</b> <i>(The overall research proposal should be assessed in terms of the feasibility, aims, significance, and originality. The scope of the research should be appropriate for the de</i></p> |  |            |           |
|  |  | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
| <b>Overall Research Proposal accepted:</b>   |  |            |           |
| <b>Comments</b>  |  |            |           |
| <p><b>6. Supervisory arrangements</b></p> <p><b>Comments about the adequacy of the arrangements for supervision of this research project</b></p>   |  |            |           |

**Additional Comments:**

**7. Resource Implications** *(The Research Proposal Review Committee should consider the research implications identified in relation to the Commencement of Candidature Form completed at the time of the student's first formal interview with their Supervisor(s)).*

|   | YES | NO | N/A |
|---|-----|----|-----|
| Laboratory access appropriate   |     |    |     |
| Adequate infrastructure and funding   |     |    |     |
| Adequate technical support available  |     |    |     |
| Further training or assistance required (If "Yes" please provide details below) |     |    |     |

**Comments**

**8. Signatures**

|                                 | Signature | Date |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Supervisor (s)                  |           |      |
|                                 |           |      |
| Other Committee Members         |           |      |
|                                 |           |      |
|                                 |           |      |
| Head of Department/School<br>or |           |      |
| Head of Postgraduate Studies    |           |      |
| <b>Received by the student</b>  |           |      |
| Student                         |           |      |

*The student and Faculty should retain copies of the signed form. The signed, original form should be forwarded to the Research Student Centre for inclusion in the student's file.*

\* Soft copy of this form is available at <http://www.uow.edu.au/research/> and may be adapted as necessary to met Faculty requirements.