



Higher Degree Research (HDR) Annual Progress Report (APR)

Frequently Asked Questions

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List of Acronyms used in this document:

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|---|---|
| APR - Annual Progress Report | APAI - Australian Postgraduate Award -Industry |
| HPS - Head of Postgraduate Studies | HDR - Higher Degree Research |
| LOA - Leave of Absence | DoR - Dean of Research |
| RSC - Research Student Centre | SMP - Student Management Package |
| SOLS - Student OnLine Service | WUPA - Wollongong Postgraduate Student Association |

1. How is the APR set out?

The first part of the APR contains the following important information to be noted by students and their supervisors:

- Important Information on Ethics and IP
- Candidature Details
- Candidature Enrolment Record for last year of enrolment

The second part of the APR requires input from all parties as follows:

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Section 1: | HDR Candidate's Report | to be completed by HDR candidate |
| Section 2 | Supervisor's Report on HDR Progress | to be completed by supervisor |

| | | |
|-----------|---|----------------------------------|
| Section 3 | HDR Candidate's response to Supervisor comments | to be completed by HDR candidate |
| Section 4 | HPS recommendations | to be completed by HPS |
| Section 5 | Dean's final Recommendations | to be completed by Dean |

2. Will a paper copy of the APR be posted?

All APRs are to be completed on-line via SOLS (refer to APR guidelines for students). A paper copy will not be needed at any stage of the APR process. However if you wish to see the APR in hard copy, or have a paper copy for your files, students can print out a copy from SOLS and staff can print a copy from SMP.

The on-line system retains the APR as a permanent record in the Student Administrative System with APRs from 2004 onwards being accessible on line.

3. How do I access the new on-line APR?

HDR candidates can access their APR via the HDR Annual Progress Report link in SOLS. New APRs are released in October each year. To access SOLS students use their student email username and password. SOLSMail messages are sent to HDR candidates advising them to access SOLS when APR input is needed.

Supervisors, Heads of Postgraduate Studies and Deans access the APR via the "APR" link in SMP. Email messages are automatically sent to academic staff when they are required to provide input to APR's.

For step by step instructions on the on-line process please refer to the HDR Student and Supervisor "Guidelines for completing on-line APRs".

4. Who needs to complete an APR?

All Higher Degree Research (HDR) students **MUST** complete the APR. This includes students who are:

- currently on Leave of Absence – it is important that they establish a research plan for the next year.
- planning to go on Leave of Absence – the APR must be completed before Leave of Absence can be approved
- intending to submit their thesis before the start of session in the ensuing year – the APR must be completed for the year passed, and should include intended submission date.
- currently doing coursework – it is important that the student's progress in coursework is monitored and research plans put in place for ensuing year(s).

5. Why is an APR necessary?

The APR is primarily designed to provide a structure for planning and reflection on your progress. It gives you and your supervisors an opportunity to review your work and to plan for the coming 12 months. Students find the process of completing the APR very useful for keeping them on track within a schedule, even though this schedule has to be fairly flexible to allow for unexpected developments.

A second, very important, function of the APR is to give you an opportunity to document any issues or problems you are having with your research so that your supervisors and the University are alerted to issues and can take action on these. This is especially important if you have a scholarship, and there are circumstances outside your control (for example, an equipment failure). In the event that you need to apply for an extension of your scholarship, you will need to have documented the problems at the time they occurred.

Finally, the APR is intended to demonstrate that you are active and making progress as a research student. Without evidence of progress, the University will review your standing as a candidate. If progress is unsatisfactory, your candidature may be terminated.

6. I have a disability – Should it be recorded?

The University endeavours to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities to assist them to study in an environment free from discrimination and in an atmosphere conducive to realization of their full potential¹.

The University encourages students to disclose the nature and extent of their disability with a Disability Liaison Officer and/or their HDR Supervisor so that we can ensure that we can best support their needs where ever possible.

7. What recommendations can be made?

After assessing the student's progress Principal Supervisors may make one of the following recommendations:

- a) **Satisfactory progress** - re-enrolment into the next year will be confirmed. The student will receive confirmation of his/her enrolment status for the new academic year. *HDR students do not have to re-enrol themselves.*
- b) **Unsatisfactory progress** - determine which of the following recommendations is appropriate:
 1. Changes to enrolment pattern (eg. Leave of Absence, part-time studies)
 2. Change of supervisor (eg. co-supervisor, new supervisor)
 3. 6 monthly review – Faculty to review process in 3-6 months (The Faculty must review the student's progress within a maximum of 6 months, detailing any milestones achieved)
 4. Probation (see below)

8. What is probation?

Probation is a process of testing the performance of the candidate over a set period subject to a special supervisory regime (see [Higher Degree Research Rules \[http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW058680.html#P861_84269\]\(http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW058680.html#P861_84269\)](http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW058680.html#P861_84269)).

If dissatisfaction is expressed in an APR, the Dean or delegate will consult with both parties independently not later than one month after lodgement of the unfavourable report. If the matter is not resolved, the Dean or delegate may recommend a period of probation to the Dean of Research.

If the HDR candidate has an objection about the probation they should submit their objection in writing to the RSC. The Dean of Research will decide whether or not the probation should be imposed.

If Dean of Research's final recommendation is probation, the Dean of Research will appoint a senior academic to oversee the supervision process and research progress for between 3 – 12 months. At the end of probation, in a report to the Dean of Research, the senior academic will make recommendations addressing any perceived problems.

If a HDR student fails to make satisfactory progress during probation period recommendations may include:

- changes to enrolment pattern (for example, Leave of Absence, part-time studies)
- change of supervisor
- 6 monthly review – Faculty to review process in 3-6 months
- probation
- other appropriate action

¹ Disability Policy – Student (2008)

If a HDR student/supervisor disagrees with any of the above outcomes decisions may be appealed by following the Academic Grievance Policy (Higher Degree Research Students).

9. What if I want to say something in my APR that my Supervisor may not like?

Students are sometimes reticent to make negative statements about how their work is going or about their supervisor, or Faculty and so on. This is understandable, as your supervisor and Head of Faculty get to see the Report. Nonetheless, if there is something you are concerned about then you should take action. You have several options.

Firstly, you could contact the other supervisor in your team (co- or external supervisor) or contact the Head of Postgraduate Studies in your academic unit or Faculty. This person is a senior academic with the job of ensuring your progress and welfare as a research student are satisfactory. Or, you could make contact with the Head of your Unit or the Dean of your Faculty. The Wollongong University Postgraduate Association (WUPA) also helps students with issues, as does the Dean of Students. And, of course, Student Services is another useful source of assistance available to all students in the University. You may also choose to complete a confidential information sheet (see question 10 below).

Whatever you do, if you take action to resolve your concerns, you will find there are many people at the University of Wollongong who are keen to advise you and help sort out any issues that you have. It is up to you to initiate action in the first instance.

10. What is the confidential information sheet?

If a student feels uncomfortable about revealing certain aspects of their candidature on the APR they may choose to complete a confidential information sheet. A copy is accessible through the on-line APR report. The student should print this out and send it directly to the Director of the Research Student Centre. The Director, Research Student Centre will look at each individual case and determine a course of action.

11. What if an APR is not completed and submitted?

With the new government regime for funding of research students, pressure for students to complete their studies in minimum time has increased substantially. Additionally, there is greater competition for admission to research degrees. With these pressures has come the need for the University to ensure that places are not being held by students who are not making genuine progress towards completion of their work. This means that the approach by the University to APRs has to be very rigorous.

Completion of an APR is COMPULSORY for HDR candidates. Candidates will not be re-enrolled if they have not completed and submitted an APR.

If there are difficulties in completing the APR within the timeframe the Faculty and the RSC must be advised.

If the completed APR is not received by the Research Student Centre by the due date your scholarship stipend payments may be suspended until an APR is completed.

12. I will be filling in an APAI progress report, do I need to complete an APR?

Yes. Under the ARC Conditions of Grant, each APAI postgraduate research student must provide an APAI Progress Report to the Research Student Centre. The Annual Progress Report is *in addition* to your APAI progress report.

13. Do HDR candidates completing coursework still have to complete and submit an APR?

Yes. It is necessary for you to consider the direction your research will take for the following year. You will also need to consider what subjects you will be doing (if coursework has yet to be completed).

14. Do HDR candidates taking Leave of Absence (LOA) in the next year have to complete and submit an APR?

Yes. Candidates need to report on the work they have done for the previous 12 months and also need written approval from their supervisor to take LOA.

15. Do HDR candidates who were on Leave of Absence (LOA) have to complete and submit an APR?

Yes. It is necessary for candidates to report on the plan of work they will follow when they return from leave.

16. Do candidates who are going to submit their thesis late in the year or before the next session still have to fill in an APR?

Yes. They will need to report on the work they have done for the previous 12 months and also indicate a submission date.

17. Who should initiate the meeting to discuss the APR?

It is the responsibility of both the supervisor and the student to ensure that the meeting takes place at a mutually convenient time.

18. What should the supervisor do if he/she cannot contact a student?

If you are unable to contact one of your students, you should advise the Research Student Centre (RSC). Please note that continuation of candidature is conditional upon completing the APR. Students who do not complete an APR will not be re-enrolled and their candidature discontinued.

19. Where can I get help?

You can obtain help by:

- using the "HELP" button in SOLS or SMP;
- reading the Online APR guidelines (available online at <http://www.uow.edu.au/rsc>);
- contacting the RSC.

If you require further information or wish to provide feedback please contact Kim Callaway, Director, Research Student Centre, Building 20, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522 (phone 02 4221 5525 or email kim_roser@uow.edu.au)

A List of Heads of Postgraduate Studies can be obtained from the RSC.