



HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH (HDR)

GUIDELINES for HDR RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW

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. 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 and completed in a timely manner.

The review should normally be finalised **before** 48cp (i.e. 1.0 EFTSL) of the degree is completed, except for the PhD (Integrated) in which case the review should be completed before 72 cp (i.e. 1.5 EFTSL) of the degree is completed.

The details of the Research Proposal Review (RPR) 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 and future enrolment, which will be given to the student. A copy of the student's written research proposal must be kept in the Faculty and the RPR form must be lodged with the Research Student Centre (RSC).

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 IRPR Committee prior to the Committee meeting to review the student's proposal.

The presentation must be made before a RPR Committee. Faculty Guidelines define the composition of the IRPR Committee for each Faculty; but each Committee must

have a minimum of three (3) staff members: the supervisor(s), one or two appropriate members of academic staff capable of assessing the research proposal, and a postgraduate research student representative as an 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 RPR. 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 RPR Form that contains the recommendations of the RPR 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. RPR Committee Recommendations

The RPR 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 RPR Form to acknowledge receipt. This documentation should also be included with the RPR Form that is forwarded to the RSC, with a copy kept in the Faculty. Recommendations may be one, or a combination of, the following options:

- Re-Review in 3 months
- Change to Supervisor(s)
- Change of Thesis topic

If the RPR Committee determines that the student's first attempt at the IRPR 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 IRPR Committee determines that the proposal is unsatisfactory, the Committee may make a recommendation to the Dean concerning the student's continued candidature. Recommendations may be one, or a combination of, the following options:

- Change to Supervisor(s)
- Change of Thesis topic
- Downgrade to Masters by Research
- Probation
- Termination of candidature

If the recommendation is Probation or to terminate candidature then the Faculty Dean shall make a formal recommendation in writing to the Dean of Research who shall make the final decision.

4. Students' Right of Appeal

If a student disagrees with any recommendations made by the Faculty in relation to their candidature, then he/she may appeal the decision to the Dean of Research.

If a student disagrees with any recommendations made by the Dean of Research in relation to their candidature, then he/she may appeal the decision to Higher Degree Research (HDR) Appeals Committee.



Appendix 1

Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students

HDR RESEARCH PROPOSAL REVIEW (RPR) REPORT

Review and Report should normally be completed before 48cp (1 EFTSL) of the degree is completed; or in the case of PhD (Integrated) students before 72 cp (or 1.5 EFTSL) of the degree is completed.

Candidature Commencement Date:...../...../.....	Date of this Review:/...../.....	Review No: 1 st <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd <input type="checkbox"/>
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1. Candidate Details	
Name:	Student No:
Academic Unit:	
Principal Supervisor:	
Co-Supervisor (if any):	
Other Review Committee Member(s):	
Title of Thesis/Topic:	

2. Research Presentation	YES	NO
Research question and scope appropriate to the degree		
Standard of presentation acceptable		
Comments		
3. Research Plan	YES	NO
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		

Comments

4. Literature Review **YES** **NO**

Preliminary Literature Review Completed

Literature review demonstrates adequate understanding of research area

Comments

5. 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

6. Supervisory arrangements

Comments about the adequacy of the arrangements for supervision of this research project

7. Overall Research Proposal *(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 degree)*

Comments

Overall Research Proposal Satisfactory (tick one) YES NO

If NO: Unsatisfactory Review recommended action for consideration by Dean of Faculty:

<input type="checkbox"/> Downgrade to Masters by Research	<input type="checkbox"/> Probation #	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor /Thesis change	<input type="checkbox"/> Termination of Candidature ¹
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** Please attached a separate sheet clearly outlining milestones and time frames to be completed by re-review date (by whom, by when: e.g., additional training, coursework, rewrite proposal, re-review, changes in supervision, topic change, status change, program transfer, discontinue). The student, supervisor(s), and review panel should have input.*

Review Panel follow-up date (if applicable):/...../.....

8. Signatures		
	Signature	Date
Supervisor (s)		

¹ **Final decision to be made by Dean of Research**

8. Signatures (CON'T)		
Other Committee Members		
Head of Postgraduate Studies		
Dean		
Received by the student		
Student		

The student and Faculty should retain copies of the signed form. The signed, original form MUST be forwarded to the RSC for inclusion in the student's file.