

Supervision of Research Candidates Procedures

Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) The purpose of these procedures is to inform staff on the process to be followed for the appointment of supervisory panels and the role and responsibilities of academics when supervising Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates.

Section 2 - Definitions

(2) Definitions for the purpose of this policy:

- a. Associate Dean, Research and HDR or the Higher Degree Research Director (HDR Director) means the relevant Associate Dean or Director (e.g. HDR Director or Director, Research and HDR) as determined by the Dean or Director, Research Institute.
- b. Co-supervisor means a Western Sydney University academic or external person as appointed by the School Dean or Director, Research Institute and has specific expertise that is useful to the candidate's research program and is available as an advisor to the candidate during the term of the candidature.
- c. Dean means the Dean of a University School.
- d. Dean, Graduate Studies and Researcher Development means the Dean of the Graduate Research School (GRS).
- e. Director, Research Institute means the Director of a University Research Institute.
- f. Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidate means a student who is undertaking independent research in either a Doctorate or Research Master's program.
- g. Principal Supervisor means a Western Sydney University academic who takes primary academic responsibility for the HDR candidature and is the administrative contact for the Graduate Research School (GRS).
- h. School or Research Institute Research and Higher Degrees Committee (SIRHDC) is the academic governance committee with particular responsibility for research and research training matters at the School or Research Institute level.
- i. University Research Studies Committee (RSC) means the academic governance committee with particular responsibility for Higher Degree Research, which reports to the University Research Committee and Academic Senate.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(3) See the [Supervision of Research Candidates Policy](#).

Section 4 - Procedures

Supervision Panel Appointments

(4) The GRS will administer HDR supervision panel records. Documentation in many cases will be managed at School or Institute level (i.e. eForms).

- a. Supervision panels at the point of admission must be identified with assigned loading and submitted via the Application Review page in the HDR Application Portal;
 - b. Changes to supervision panels must be submitted via an online Variation to Candidature Form.
- (5) School and Research Institutes must have procedures in place to:
- a. approve appointments of and changes to supervisory panels ensuring the adequate composition of all panels;
 - b. include an Indigenous supervisor with workload on the panel of Indigenous HDR candidates, where possible.

Supervision Replacement during Candidature

(6) If the appointment of a new Principal Supervisor is required, then either the Co-supervisor or an alternate eligible supervisor shall be appointed to the role of Principal Supervisor with the approval of the Dean or Director, Research Institute. The suitability of the Co-supervisor or other proposed supervisors must be discussed with the candidate. Such candidatures will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the candidate is appropriately supported.

(7) If a breakdown of the supervisory relationship occurs, all reasonable attempts will be made to resolve a breakdown in the supervisory relationship. Attempts at mediation should be made by the Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director. The Dean, Graduate Studies and Researcher Development must be advised of the issues that have arisen and be involved in mediation if the issue is not able to be resolved at School or Institute level. Use of independent mediators may be used if mediation is not able to resolve the issue.

(8) Where an appropriate replacement Principal Supervisor cannot be identified within a reasonable timeframe (see Clause (30) of the [Supervision of Research Candidates Policy](#)), the Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director may require the candidate to take a period of leave until an appropriate supervision panel is in place.

Registration of Supervisors

(9) The HDR Supervisor Register is owned and administered by the GRS. The GRS maintains a record of all Principal Supervisors and Co-supervisors at the University.

(10) Western Sydney University academics must apply to be registered and complete the registration requirements via a Supervision Registration Form.

(11) To have a status of 'active' all supervisors must, in the first instance, complete the online training module 'HDR Supervisor Training'.

(12) To maintain the status of 'active', all supervisors must:

- a. must participate once every two years in a recognised training workshop, forum or other professional development event, approved by their Associate Dean, Research and HDR or their HDR Director;
- b. meet School or Institute criteria for one of the Research Profile categories set out in the University Work Plan Policy 2020, unless specifically exempted by the Dean or Director, Research Institute;
- c. maintain a satisfactory standard of supervisory performance monitored as part of the University Academic Career Development, Planning and Review process. Supervision performance will be reviewed in light of attrition, candidature progress and completion times, complaints and grievances, prizes and awards as well as candidate examination results. Refer to Part H of the [Supervision of Research Candidates Policy](#).

Professional Development Activities for HDR Supervisors

(13) Appropriate professional development activities to satisfy Clause (12)a include, but are not limited to:

- a. participation in one of the supervisor training workshops presented by the GRS;

- b. participation in a designated supervision development activity organised by the GRS;
- c. participation in Indigenous cultural competency training and training focused on Indigenous Research Methodologies;
- d. presenting by invitation at an HDR skills development workshop;
- e. completion of an approved online supervisor professional development program;
- f. attendance at a conference on research training;
- g. participation in external seminars or workshops on research training and supervision; and
- h. participation in a designated supervision development activity organised by their School or Institute and approved by the Dean, Graduate Studies and Researcher Development.

(14) Where a supervisor has participated in an external activity (e.g. a workshop or conference attendance) or another activity that they feel constitutes appropriate professional development, they may make a case to the Dean, Graduate Studies.

(15) Attendance at external activities must be reported to the GRS for record-keeping.

Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor

(16) The Principal Supervisor is responsible for managing administrative requirements associated with candidature including:

- a. advising the candidate and making recommendations to the Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director on proposed changes to candidature, including:
 - i. changes to thesis title;
 - ii. Supervision Panel Membership;
 - iii. mode of enrolment (part-time or full-time study);
 - iv. leave of absence;
 - v. early submission for examination;
 - vi. extension of scholarship;
 - vii. extension of candidature.
- b. application to upgrade to doctoral candidature from Research Masters;
- c. ensure that progress milestones are met, including:
 - i. [Supervisors and Higher Degree Research Candidates Compact](#);
 - ii. Early Candidature Plan;
 - iii. Confirmation of Commencement;
 - iv. Progress Reports;
 - v. Confirmation of submission;
 - vi. Additional milestones may be added in consultation with the HDR candidate and the Associate Dean, Research and HDR, or HDR Director.
- d. monitoring the candidate's progress and taking action if the progress of the candidature is unsatisfactory;
- e. ensuring that candidates are familiar with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018](#) (including responsibilities of researchers);
- f. ensuring that ethics applications meet all expected standards and are appropriately submitted;
- g. ensuring that the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#), Procedure and Guidelines are observed;
- h. ensuring that agreement/approval is reached between the candidate and the supervisory panel concerning authorship of publications, conference papers and acknowledgement of contributions during and after candidature;

- i. ensuring that candidates are aware of the [Student Misconduct Rule](#) (including the [Student Misconduct Rule - Inappropriate Behaviour Guidelines](#));
- j. ensuring that candidates are aware of University policies on intellectual property and plagiarism;
- k. reporting any suspicion that a candidate has committed misconduct to an Authorised Officer under the [Student Misconduct Rule](#);
- l. ensuring HDR candidates are aware and complete training requirements addressing risk mitigation strategies including cyber security and foreign interference;
- m. reporting of the risk of foreign interference to international HDR candidates, and domestic HDR candidates conducting research overseas to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research (PVC, Research);
- n. ensuring decisions to include overseas based academics as external supervisors comply with the University risk mitigation strategies;
- o. managing the examinations process, including:
 - i. discussing the pool of potential examiners with the candidate, and identifying any possible exclusions;
 - ii. arranging for the appointment of examiners;
 - iii. making initial contact with examiners to ask if they are prepared to serve;
 - iv. endorsing the readiness for submission and the lodgment of the thesis;
 - v. commenting on examiners' reports and making recommendations to the SIRHDC or the RSC on the examination outcome;
 - vi. endorsing completion of amendments; and
 - vii. approving readiness for re-examination, where applicable.

(17) Principal Supervisors will ensure that the respective responsibilities and commitments of candidates and supervisors are agreed by counter signing the HDR Student/Supervisor Compact document within two months of candidature and lodging it with the Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director. Refer to Section 5 - Guidelines.

(18) Principal Supervisors are expected to provide advice and mentoring concerning supervisor roles and responsibilities to less experienced panel members especially Early Career Researchers.

Responsibilities of the Co-Supervisors

(19) The Co-supervisors are responsible for:

- a. providing support to the HDR candidate when the Principal Supervisor is on leave, (see Clause (30) of the [Supervision of Research Candidates Policy](#) for acting in the position of Principal Supervisor);
- b. offering specific discipline expertise to the HDR candidate as required;
- c. providing input to the candidate's progress and support the quality of research output;
- d. ensuring agreement and approval is provided concerning the candidate's authorship of publications, conference papers and acknowledgement of contributions;
- e. supporting the examination process, including:
 - i. endorsing the readiness for submission and the lodgment of the thesis;
 - ii. commenting on examiners' reports and making recommendations to the SIRHDC or the RSC on the examination outcome;
 - iii. endorsing completion of amendments; and
 - iv. approving readiness for re-examination, where applicable.

Responsibilities of the External Supervisor

(20) The role and responsibilities of an industry-based external supervisor will be determined on a case-by-case basis as determined by the needs of the HDR candidate and with the endorsement of the Principal Supervisor and the approval of the Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director.

(21) Industry-based supervisors will not be allocated University workload, and they are not required to be on the HDR Supervisor Register.

(22) Information will be provided at orientation that includes the [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#), HDR policies, processes and procedures, [Research Ethics Policy](#), and the relevant Degree policy.

Appointment of End-User Advisors

(23) End-User Advisors provide advice and expertise, and access to resources and research settings in addition to those provided by the supervisory panel.

(24) End-User Advisors can be added to the supervisory panel via the HDR Application Portal at the commencement of an HDR's candidature or via a Variation of Candidature Form during the candidature.

(25) End-Users Advisors are not included on the Supervisors Register.

Monitoring Supervision Performance

(26) The School Dean or Director, Research Institute will be provided with annual reports of supervisor metrics by the Dean, Graduate Studies and Researcher Development, including student attrition, candidature progress and completion times, complaints and grievances, prizes and awards as well as candidate examination results.

(27) Good supervision practice is rewarded and recognised through nominations for the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award for Excellence in Postgraduate Research Training and Supervision, in School and Institute prizes, and in promotion criteria.

(28) The relevant Dean or Director, Research Institute may request a review of a supervisor's status if that supervisor is:

- a. found to have committed research misconduct or other professional misconduct. Refer to the [Bullying Prevention Policy](#), [Code of Conduct](#), [Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification and Victimisation Prevention Policy](#), [Mooting and Hazing Prevention Policy](#), [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#), [Respect and Inclusion in Learning and Working Policy](#), [Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy](#), [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and relevant sections of the current staff agreements); or
- b. identified in their academic performance and development review as failing to perform their duties to a satisfactory standard as described in the policy.

(29) Supervisors identified as failing to perform their duties to a satisfactory standard will be notified as being at risk and reported to the relevant Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director. An initial warning will be communicated to the supervisor, and a training or mentoring plan will be developed and agreed upon with the Associate Dean, Research and HDR or the HDR Director.

(30) The Dean, Graduate Studies and Researcher Development will be notified or supervisors identified as being at risk and will advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International.

(31) Supervisors whose active status on the Supervisors Register is removed as a result of being at risk may apply for reinstatement if they are able to demonstrate that they have since achieved the criteria for active status.

Grievances and Complaints

(32) Issues and grievances relating to supervision of HDR candidates will be managed in a timely manner that aims to achieve informal resolution without escalation to senior staff. Candidates and supervisors are expected to seek negotiated solutions to any problems prior to initiating a formal complaint. When grievances cannot be resolved between the Supervisory Panel and candidate, representations should be made to the relevant Associate Dean, Research and HDR or HDR Director and unresolved matters can subsequently be escalated by any party to the Dean or Director, Research Institute and to the Dean, Graduate Studies and Researcher Development if necessary. Candidates have access to the processes set out in the University's [Complaint Management Policy](#).

Section 5 - Guidelines

(33) A [Supervisors and Higher Degree Research Candidates Compact](#).

(34) [HDR Supervisors webpage](#) - Details of Supervisor Training and resources (staff login required).

Status and Details

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