

HDR Student Candidature Stages Guideline – Faculty of Science

Abstract

These guidelines describe the assessment requirements and processes for HDR Student Candidature Stages in the Faculty of Science.

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Implementation Officer	Associate Dean (Research)	
Relevant to	HDR Students HDR Student Supervisors The School of Life Sciences and the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences in the Faculty of Science	
Related documents	University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures	
Legislation	Student Rule 11.15	
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Superseded documents	Doctoral Study Plan guidelines for HDR students	
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1. Purpose

This document describes key procedures that govern the Graduate Research Program in the Faculty of Science. All students, supervisors and program managers need to be aware of these guidelines and should refer to them as needed.

The Faculty of Science HDR Student Candidature Stages Guidelines are a companion document to the [University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures](#) approved by the UTS Graduate Research School Board (GRSB). Where there is any inconsistency between the two documents, the UTS procedures take precedence. This document clarifies how particular processes work specifically at Faculty of Science. For anything not covered here, refer to the University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures (UGRM).

2. Scope

The guideline will be implemented by 1 January 2019 and will apply to HDR Students, their Supervisors, and HDR Panels, and professional staff supporting HDR administration.

3. Definitions

Candidature Stage – The UTS Graduate Research Education Framework comprises three formal candidature stages for both Master’s (Research) degree graduate research students and Doctoral degree graduate research students. The objective of each stage, and its associated assessment, is to ensure that the student has the necessary knowledge and skills to complete the research program successfully and in a timely manner (refer to Student Rule 11.15).

HDR Panel – The aim of the HDR panel is to provide a supportive, fair and equitable assessment process for our HDR students, and allow issues to be raised and considered objectively. There will be two panels: one for HDRs in Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MaPS), and the other for HDRs in the School of Life Sciences (SoLS), C3 and itthree. The HDR panels will be responsible for assessing the HDR’s written work and conducting the oral interviews in Stage 1 and Stage 2. Each HDR panel will have 4-5 members, from which a 3 panel members will be assigned (to exclude any conflicts of interest such as supervisor/co-supervisors/close collaborators) to assess the HDR students’ written assessment and conduct the oral interviews. See section 5 below for more detail.

HDR Student – A student enrolled in the faculty for a PhD or Masters by Research

Supervisor – members of the academic or research staff internal to the Faculty of Science plus any academic or research staff from external institutions as required. One of the internal members of the supervising panel is the principal supervisor. The principal supervisor fulfils the Faculty and University Graduate School requirements for Category 1 supervisor.

Principal Supervisor – member of the supervising panel who has the responsibility for the academic progression of the student at UTS. This is operationally defined as the academic member of staff of the Faculty of Science who signs all documentation related to the student, including, for example, progress reviews and requests for leave of absence.

4. Guideline principles

The intent of this guideline is to provide guidance to students and supervisors in the Faculty of Science about what is expected of them in the Stage Assessment process.

5. Guideline statement

HDR Panel: The aim of the HDR panels is to provide a supportive, fair and equitable assessment process for our HDR students, and allow issues to be raised and considered objectively. The HDR panels will be responsible for assessing the HDR's written work and conducting the oral interviews in Stage 1 and Stage 2. The oral interviews will take place over a week in May and in November. Each HDR panel will have 4-5 members, from which 3 panel members will be assigned (to exclude any conflicts of interest such as supervisor/co-supervisors/close collaborators) to assess the HDR students' written assessment and conduct the oral interviews. Although the interview is primarily an assessment, they also represent an important opportunity for each HDR to meet with a three person panel of academics, discuss their project, their progress, their academic supervision, and what needs to be in place for their research to progress to the next stage.

The HDR Panel members also represent a valuable resource and group for consultation with School Research Advisory Committees, if required. The term for HDR Panel members will be two years with the possibility of renewal. The workload allocation is 0.1 FTE.

5.1 Stage 1

The Stage 1 Candidature Assessment will comprise an oral and written component as directed by GRCM.

Requirement: The Graduate Research Student should be able to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to select, analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate relevant material and literature pertaining to the field of study;
- Understanding of key concepts, problems and issues in relevant literature;
- Substantiation of the choice of research topic/questions and its significance as an original contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field of study;
- Justification of proposed research design and methods;
- Understanding of resource implications;
- Understanding of ethical implications;
- Adoption of a suitable theoretical or conceptual framework for the proposed study;
- A feasible plan and capability to complete the proposed research project within the prescribed time for the degree.

Masters candidate (full time)	Within 6 months of enrolment
Masters candidate (part time)	Within 12 months of enrolment
Doctoral candidate (full time)	Within 12 months of enrolment
Doctoral candidate (part time)	Within 24 months of enrolment

Written: This will be submitted on the 1st Friday of November for PhD students commencing in Autumn (1st Friday of May for Autumn Master's student) and 1st Friday of May for PhD students commencing in Spring (1st Friday of November for Spring Master's student). Alternative submission date needs to be applied and approved by the RAO for special conditions, e.g. Leave of absences (LOA), delays due to an uncontrolled situation.

A short literature review of no more than 2500 words, preferably in a draft manuscript format including the context, hypothesis and aims of the project, and brief methodology. This written

work must not be a recycling of the written work from the student's Honours literature review or thesis. The student should be able to demonstrate the following:

- An ability to select, analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate relevant material and literature pertaining to the field of study;
- Understanding of key concepts, problems and issues in relevant literature;
- Substantiation of the choice of research topic/questions and its significance as an original contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field of study;
- Understanding of ethical implications;
- Adoption of a suitable research design and methods.

The written review will be submitted to the school research officer who will forward it to the HDR panel for assessment.

Oral Interview with the HDR Panel: These interviews will take place at the last full week of November for PhD students commencing in Autumn session (last full week of May for Autumn Master's student) and last full week of May for PhD students commencing in Spring session (last full week of November for Spring Master's student).

The student will attend an oral interview with the HDR panel – 10-15 minutes – and will be asked questions about their project and their progress to date. In general, the student should be able to demonstrate the following:

- Understanding of key concepts, problems and issues in relevant literature;
- Substantiation of the choice of research topic/questions and its significance;
- Justification of proposed research design and methods;
- A feasible plan and capability to complete the proposed research in future stages;

The Supervisor will not be present.

The student will be asked to raise any issues, concerns or problems or any other matters they may wish to discuss. It is optional for the student to bring a support person to the oral Interview (e.g. fellow student, a UTS staff member unrelated to the supervisory panel, a family member, or a member from the UTS Student Association).

Although the interview is primarily an assessment, they also represent an important opportunity for each HDR to meet with a three person panel of academics, discuss their project, their progress, their academic supervision, and what needs to be in place for their research to progress to the next stage.

Debriefing meetings will then be held after the interview week between the HDR Panel, the School Research Officer, the Associate Head of School (Research) and the HDR Director (escalated to the Associate Dean (Research) where required), with the aim to build research culture, enhance research infrastructure/support and to head off any issues and resolve any disputes.

Outcome: The panel will then give the recommendation of the outcome for Stage 1: Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory with reassessment required, or Unsatisfactory in writing based on the written work and oral interview. The written report by the panel and the outcome of the assessment will be signed off by the RAO and provided to the student and GRS within 7 business days of the last assessment date. Failure to submit or complete any of the tasks by the due date will be graded as Unsatisfactory. Appeals will be as per the Graduate Research and Supervision Policy and in accordance with the University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures.

5.2 Stage 2

The Stage 2 Candidature Assessment will comprise an oral and written assessment as directed by the University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures.

In Stage 2, the Graduate Research Student must be able to demonstrate the following;

- an ability to present emerging findings in a written form appropriate to the discipline;
- an ability to critically analyse emerging findings in the research field;
- an ability to discuss outcomes
- the capacity to receive and respond to critical feedback.

Masters candidate (full time)	Within 12 months of enrolment
Masters candidate (part time)	Within 24 months of enrolment
Doctoral candidate (full time)	Within 24 months of enrolment
Doctoral candidate (part time)	Within 48 months of enrolment

Written: The written submission will be reviewed and certified by the Principal and Co-Supervisors, and then submitted to the HDR panel on 1st Friday of November for Autumn starters and 1st Friday of May for Spring starters and assessed by the panel. Alternative submission date needs to be applied and approved by the RAO for special conditions, eg. LOA, delays due to an uncontrolled situation.

A written submission of not more than 5000 words – A draft result chapter consisting of a brief introduction, method (detailed), results to date (preliminary) and discussion (brief discussion on preliminary data) sections;

OR

A first author draft manuscript / publication (or as appropriate within the discipline) on research outcomes and early interpretations (a literature review is not acceptable at this Stage). The student's contribution and relevance to their PhD thesis need to be clearly stated with the submission.

The student must be able to demonstrate the following:

- an ability to present the research findings during the stage 2 in a written form appropriate to the discipline;
- an ability to critically analyse emerging findings in the research field;
- an ability to discuss of the outcome briefly.

Oral: The oral presentation needs to be completed before the last full week of November for Autumn starters and last full week of May for Spring starters. This can be a 15-minute presentation on research outcome followed by a 5-minute Q&A within their own discipline group or research team, or an oral presentation for 10min+ at a national or international conference during any time during Stage 2. Either activity needs to be certified by the principal supervisor.

The student must be able to demonstrate the following:

- an ability to present the research findings during the stage 2 to peers appropriate to the discipline in an oral presentation;
- an ability to critically analyse emerging findings in the research field;
- the capacity to receive and respond to critical feedback.

Interview with the HDR Panel: Students will be invited to be interviewed by the HDR panel where they can discuss their project, their progress, their academic supervision, and what needs to be in place for their research to progress to the next stage. The interviews will take place at the last full week of November for Autumn starters and last full week of May for Spring starters. It is optional for the student to bring a support person to the Oral Interview (eg. fellow student, a UTS staff member unrelated to the supervisory panel, a family member, or a member from the UTS Student Association). The supervisor will not be present.

Debriefing meetings will then be held after the interview week between the HDR Panel, the School Research Officer, the Associate Head of School (Research) and the HDR Director (escalated to the Associate Dean (Research) where required), with the aim to build research culture, enhance research infrastructure/support and to head off any issues and resolve any disputes.

Outcome: The panel will then give the recommendation of the outcome for Stage 2: Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory with reassessment required, or Unsatisfactory in writing according to the completion of the written and oral activities. Failure to submit or complete any of the tasks by due date will be graded as Unsatisfactory. The written report by the panel and the outcome of the assessment will be signed off by the RAO and provided to the student and GRS within 7 business days of the scheduled panel interview date. Appeals will be as per the Graduate Research and Supervision Policy and in accordance with the University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures.

5.3 Stage 3

The Stage 3 Candidature Assessment will comprise an oral and written assessment as directed by the University Graduate Research Candidature Management, Thesis Preparation and Submission Procedures.

Masters candidate (full time)	Within 18 months of enrolment
Masters candidate (part time)	Within 36 months of enrolment
Doctoral candidate (full time)	Within 36 months of enrolment
Doctoral candidate (Part time)	Within 72 months of enrolment

Written:

The HDR student's principal supervisor will complete, sign and submit the stage 3 assessment sign-off sheet to confirm that the student's thesis is progressing well and they are on track for submission as planned. The latest submission for this document is one week after the stage 3 oral presentation.

A thesis outline, with at least one complete or nearly complete result chapter and with an intended Contents Page clearly listed in the document and comprehensive timetable for thesis completion. Published first author papers that are relevant to the PhD project may be used as data chapters.

In the thesis outline, the student must be able to demonstrate the following;

- all the criteria used for examination of the final thesis;
- a structure appropriate to the genre;
- clear and cohesive writing;
- accurate grammar, spelling, punctuation;
- a feasible plan for completion before EWS.

The thesis outline will be reviewed by the Principal and Co-Supervisors who will send their recommendation of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory to the School research officer by the due date.

Oral: completed as per time in the table. Alternative submission date needs to be applied and approved by the RAO for special conditions, eg. LOA, delays due to uncontrolled situation.

The oral will comprise a final presentation utilising the current criteria and process – 35-45 mins with 10 minute audience Q&A. The Principal Supervisor will nominate a minimum of 3 assessors for each student. The presentation will encompass a complete overview of the project in a PhD Defence style. The student will be awarded Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory by the assessors, which will be sent to the School research officer.

In the oral presentation, the graduate research student must be able to demonstrate the following;

- understanding of key concepts and gaps in relevant literature;
- substantiation of the research topics;
- justification of research design and methods
- a well-argued description of the research findings during the candidature;
- the ability to discuss of the outcome in depth;
- a capacity to defend the research finding;
- an original contribution to knowledge.

Failure to submit or complete any of the tasks will be graded as Unsatisfactory. The student may book an appointment with the RAO or a member of the current HDR Panel if they have any issues with the outcomes of these assessments. It is optional for the student to bring a support person to the Oral Interview (eg. fellow student, a UTS staff member unrelated to the supervisory panel, a family member, or a member from the UTS Student Association). The RAO will then check the submission and sign off the result for the GRS.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Accountable Officer: Associate Dean, Research

Implementation Officer: Director of HDR Programs (RAO), Associate Head of School, Research, HDR Panel members

Other positions and committees: School Research Officer, Faculty Research and Development Manager.

7. Acknowledgements

- Associate Head of School, Research (Life Sciences)
- Associate Head of School, Research (Mathematical and Physical Sciences)
- Faculty Senior Management Group
- Faculty HDR student representatives
- School of Life Sciences Board
- School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences Board
- Director of HDR Programs
- Graduate Research School Board
- Director, GRS
- Associate Dean (Research)

8. Version control and change history

Date	Version	Approved by	Amendment
22/02/19	3	Science Faculty Board	Amendments to clarify HDR panels
24/08/18	2	Science Faculty Board	Amendments to change to HDR panels
04/09/15	1	Science Faculty Board	New document