# Postgraduate Application Assessment Criteria and Process

***This process has been streamlined for the purposes of short listing applications for the PhD in qualitative impact assessment of gender equality related to WASH. This application requests maximum of ONE page of written response per selection criteria, and is due Friday 27 July 2018. The successful applicant will then prepare a full application meeting the standard requirements for admission to the ISF-UTS postgraduate program, for consideration by the Faculty Board in September 2018.***

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants should prepare and submit:

1. A document entitled 'Application for Admission to ISF-UTS' containing written responses to the four selection criteria described below.
2. An up to date CV including information on country/ies of citizenship.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

This section describes the criteria that the Institute for Sustainable Futures at University of Technology Sydney (ISF-UTS) uses to assess and rank postgraduate research student applications. Places in the ISF-UTS postgraduate program are limited, highly sought after, and highly competitive.

The assessment process comprises four equally weighted criteria that have been carefully chosen to span a breadth of professional and academic experiences and potentials:

1. Professional Experience - strength & relevance relative to the candidate's opportunities (impact)

2. Research Output (quality and impact)

3. Research Proposal (quality)

4. Academic Merit (quality)

The applicant should prepare a document describing how they meet the criteria. Further details of the meaning and scope of each are provided below.

The interview committee will assess and rank all applications. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview during August 2018.

## 1. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (IMPACT): STRENGTH AND RELEVANCE (1/2 – 1 PAGE)

Professional experience is primarily about the demonstrated impact of an applicant's work to date. The term 'professional experience' should be interpreted broadly, for example it may include both paid employment and volunteer roles. The strength of the professional experience will be assessed relative to the candidate's opportunities, including stage of career. The relevance of the professional experience will be assessed relative to the applicant's proposed field of study.

Applicants should give details of their professional experience in their CV, and make a case for its strength and relevance in their application document.

## 2. RESEARCH OUTPUT (QUALITY AND IMPACT) (1/2 – 1 PAGE)

Research outputs will be assessed on their quality and impact relative to the candidate's opportunity. Research outputs include publications (e.g. research or other analytical reports, contributions to industry publications, conference papers, academic journal papers, etc), and presentations (e.g. seminars, conferences, digital media, etc).

Applicants should include documentation of their research outputs in their CV. In their ISF-UTS application document applicants should make clear their role in both the research behind, and the production of, the outputs, because research is very often a team affair. Applicants should consider and respond to the dimensions below in making a case for the quality and impact of their outputs.

Quality will be assessed according to

i. the quality of the contribution, using our critical thinking scale (Appendix A), and with reference to the University of Adelaide's Research Skills Development Framework – see http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/rsd/ for details, including articles that explain the framework. Generally, successful ISF-UTS applicants will be expected to demonstrate 'good' to 'excellent' critical thinking skills, and Level IV or V research skills.
ii. the quality of the location of the contribution e.g., the standing of the publication, conference, etc.

The impact of the research outputs will be assessed by considering what has changed as a result of releasing the research output. For example, how was the output received by in the organisation/sector/field; to what extent has it been taken up in the organisation/sector/field, cited by others, adopted in practice, etc.

## 3. RESEARCH PROPOSAL (QUALITY) (1 PAGE)

The successful candidate will be invited to prepare a full research proposal for consideration by the Faculty Board, as described in Appendix B. The research proposal in the application form should be a shorter response (one page maximum) describing how you would approach the research topic. You may like to use relevant headings in Appendix B to guide your response. You could, for example, articulate the particular research angle you would most like to explore in this project.

The selection panel recognizes that applicants will not have access to all information about the project. The panel will use the one-page research proposal to assess applicants' demonstration of relevant research skills. The successful applicant will then work with supervisors to co-develop the full research proposal (Appendix B) for submission to Faculty Board.

## 4. ACADEMIC MERIT (QUALITY) (1/2 – 1 PAGE)

Academic merit will be assessed on:

i. the extent of successfully completed studies (e.g., Bachelor's degree, Honours degree, Masters undertaken largely by coursework, Masters undertaken largely by research, etc.
ii. the demonstrated and verified level of attainment in those studies.

Applicants should provide details of qualifications in their CV, and make a case for their strength and relevance in their application document. It may be helpful for applicants to include guidance for assessors on interpreting the extent and level of their academic achievements.

## APPENDIX B

### CRITICAL THINKING ASSESSMENT FRAME

This frame has been adapted from material gleaned in pre-internet days from something that was then called the Centre for Critical Thinking in the USA. It provides a useful starting point for assessing Research Outputs and Outlines of Intended Research developed by prospective research students at ISF. Generally, candidates should demonstrate 'good' or 'excellent' critical thinking skills.

| Excellent | Good | Sound | Shaky | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clear<br>Well-reasoned<br>Insightful<br>Self-evaluation evident<br>Raises important questions<br>Recognises important assumptions<br>Clarifies key concepts<br>Identifies competing points of view<br>Reasons from a clearly stated premise<br>Shows sensitivity to important implications and consequences<br>Shows that basic concepts and principles are internalised<br>Gives an in-depth analysis of questions and problems | On the whole is clear, precise and well-reasoned, but without depth of insight<br>Comprehension of basic concepts and principles.<br>Demonstrates competence in self-evaluation<br>Often raises questions and issues<br>Recognises some questionable assumptions<br>Sometimes identifies competing points of view.<br>Demonstrates commitment to reason from clearly stated premises.<br>Sound reasoning and problem-solving within a field | Mixed thinking and performance<br>Inconsistently clear, precise and well-reasoned<br>Doesn't display depth of insight.<br>Inconsistent comprehension of and internalisation of basic concepts and principles<br>Sometimes raises questions and issues<br>Sometimes recognises key assumptions<br>Inconsistently uses language in accordance with educated usage<br>Sometimes identifies competing points of view<br>Does not demonstrate a commitment to reason from a clearly stated premise.<br>Inconsistent reasoning and problem solving within a field | Acquisition of knowledge by memorising rather than comprehension<br>Thinking is typically unclear, imprecise and poorly reasoned<br>Superficial or mistaken comprehension of basic concepts and principles.<br>Does poorly in self-evaluation<br>Superficially analyses questions and problems<br>Only partially clarifies concepts<br>Rarely identifies competing points of view<br>Does not recognise his/her assumptions<br>Insensitive to important implications and consequences<br>Poor reasoning and problem-solving | Acquisition of knowledge by memorising rather than comprehension<br>Regularly unclear, imprecise and poorly reasoned<br>Basic terms and distinctions are regularly incorrectly used<br>Mistaken comprehension of basic concepts and principles<br>Does not raise questions and issues<br>Does not recognise his/her assumptions<br>Does not clarify concepts<br>Does not use language in keeping with educated usage<br>Confuses his/her point of view with the truth<br>No understanding of a commitment to reason from clearly stated premises<br>Oblivious to important implications and consequences<br>Incompetent reasoning and problem-solving |

## APPENDIX B

### FULL RESEARCH PROPOSAL: ISF GUIDELINES

**Note: this appendix is included for information only. Applicants are not required to complete a full proposal at this stage, and should instead write a ONE PAGE research proposal as described above. Only the successful applicant will be required to prepare the full 5-page research proposal as described here.**

ISF-UTS requires prospective students to prepare a Research Proposal for consideration by the Faculty Board. The successful candidate for the advertised PhD will prepare a full proposal, working in coordination with supervisors, for the Faculty Board meeting in September 2018.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance about what the Institute for Sustainable Futures expects to see in a Research Proposal.

Aim for about 5 pages. You will need to work hard to be pithy and concise, at the same time as demonstrating excellence in your critical thinking and communication skills, consistent with entry level requirements for research higher degree students.

*Introduction and Significance (½ page)*

- State **your** research problem first. (i.e. not the general issue, but your piece of the pie)
- Make a case for the significance and importance of your intended research. Why does it matter? To whom? What use will it be?

*Background (1-2 pages)*

- Explain the background to the research problem through a review of relevant literature that demonstrates a sound knowledge of past and recent work in your domain of interest. Be sure to include peer-reviewed literature in your reading and analysis, as well as popular and/or industry material if that is relevant.
- Summarise and critique the main findings reported by others

*Proposed Research Questions and Contribution (½ -1 page)*

- Link your findings from the literature review with your own ideas. That is, specifically, what will you ask and answer? Are there any hypotheses to be tested?
- What are the expected outcomes? What do you see as your contribution to the topic under study? What use will it be? To whom? In what ways?

*Preliminary Research Design (1 page)*

- Theoretical Framework: What are your preliminary ideas about theoretical frameworks that might guide your study?
- Methodology: What methodology fits well with your question and your theoretical framework e.g., Do you plan to set up a mainly quantitative or qualitative study or something in between? Are you thinking of using case studies, surveys, models or some other method?
- Data: What type of data will help you answer the questions? Where and how will you collect the data?

*Budget (½ page)*

- Think through the costs of your study and specify how you plan to cover them. Distinguish between your project costs (e.g., travel, fieldwork, software, etc) and your personal costs for undertaking postgraduate study (living allowance, tuition fees, etc).

*References (½ -1 page)*

- List your readings