# Higher Degree by Research Supervision Procedure

## 1 Purpose

To outline the processes, roles, and responsibilities for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Supervisors, as well as the process by which they are accredited.

## 2 Scope

This Procedure applies to all persons acting as Supervisors to HDR Students at the University. This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Flexible Work and Working Arrangements Policy and Flexible Work and Working Arrangements Procedure.

## 3 Procedure Overview

This Procedure outlines the process, standards and responsibilities for accrediting, appointing, reviewing and re-accrediting HDR Supervisors, and establishes the minimum level of supervision support to be provided to HDR Students at the University.

This Procedure aligns with:

- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*: Standard 4.2 Research Training

## 4 Procedures

### 4.1 Supervisory Team

#### 4.1.1 Role of Supervisory Team Members

Each HDR Student will have a minimum of two HDR Supervisors; normally a Principal HDR Supervisor and at least one Associate HDR Supervisor:

- The Principal HDR Supervisor is responsible for directing the HDR Student's academic work, monitoring the submission of reports, and meeting other administrative responsibilities. The Principal HDR Supervisor is not required to hold the majority of the supervisory load within the HDR Supervisory Team.
- The Associate HDR Supervisor has relevant research expertise related to the Student's research and assists in the academic supervision of the Student.

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Where it is identified that specialist expertise, external to the University, would be of benefit to the Student, an external HDR Supervisor may also be appointed to the supervisory team. External HDR Supervisors can either be appointed as the Associate HDR Supervisor, or as an additional third member of the team. An external HDR Supervisors can include staff from another university, industry, government, or non-government organisations. An external HDR Supervisor is not a University Employee nor do they hold adjunct, emeritus, or honorary status.

For details regarding eligibility of HDR Supervisors, please refer to section 4.3.

### 4.1.2 Periods of extended leave

In the event that the Principal HDR Supervisor is on an extended period of leave (i.e., greater than 30 University Business Days), the Principal HDR Supervisor would normally appoint an Associate HDR Supervisor to the role of Principal HDR Supervisor for the duration of extended leave and advise the Graduate Research School (GRS) of these arrangements. The Principal HDR Supervisor will notify the GRS if the Associate HDR Supervisor is not able or eligible to assume the role so a replacement can be organised by the GRS in conjunction with the Student and Supervisory team.

If a Principal HDR Supervisor is not able to supervise a Student for a period exceeding 30 University Business Days and no alternative arrangements have been made, the Student or Associate HDR Supervisor should contact the GRS and the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Coordinator will put in place alternative supervisory arrangements for approval by the Dean (GRS), in consultation with the Student. Alternative arrangements may include:

1. the appointment of a short-term replacement supervisor to cover any absence;
2. the re-weighting of roles within the supervisory team; and
3. the designation of supervisor administrative responsibilities to another supervisory team member.

Alternative arrangements should be in line with requirements outlined in section 4.3 of this procedure, unless prior approval has been sought by the Dean (GRS).

### 4.1.3 Supervisory Team Workload Allocation

Supervisors employed by the University are allocated an appropriate percentage of supervision load relevant to their contribution, ranging from 20% (minimum) to 80% (maximum). The total of all University supervisors' contributions must be 100%. External supervisors do not receive a workload allocation and would not normally receive a supervision load.

A Supervisory Team may consist of two or more HDR co-Supervisors of equal supervisory load, although for administrative purposes one must be nominated as the Principal HDR Supervisor.

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### 4.1.4 Identifying an HDR Supervisor

There are a number of steps to identifying and confirming a supervision team:

1. Identify potential Supervisor/s: Students are encouraged to review the University's website and staff research profiles to identify a potential supervisor in their area of research. A nomination of a potential supervisor is required in the application for Admission or change of supervisor.

2. Confirm supervisor/s: The nominated supervisor/s will review the student and their proposed project and confirm if they would be an appropriate supervisor with the required expertise and capability, and that they have received appropriate workload approval.

3. Supervisor/s confirmed: The HDR Coordinator will endorse that the supervisor/s meet the required eligibility. The research expertise of the supervisory team should be complementary to the Student's project.

4. Students advised of confirmed arrangements: HDR Students will be notified of their Principal HDR Supervisor in their letter of offer, or during a change of supervisor process.

Should a proposed HDR Supervisor have a real or perceived Conflict of Interest in relation to the supervision of an HDR Student, a different person will be appointed as the HDR Supervisor by the GRS in consultation with the Student and remaining Supervision team. All Conflicts of Interest are to be declared and assessed in accordance with the University's Conflict of Interest Policy and the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) Good Practice Guidelines for Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research.

## 4.2 Changes to Supervision

### 4.2.1 Change of Supervisory Team

In extenuating circumstances an HDR Student may request for a change to the Supervisory Team. It is not the right of a Student to dismiss their supervisory team. Such requests will need to be approved by the HDR Coordinator. The HDR Coordinator will consult with the Student and/or supervisory team and reserves the right to decline any proposed changes.

Any Student Grievance will be managed in accordance with the Student Grievance and Resolution Policy and subordinate procedures.

If no other suitable HDR Supervisor is available within the University, the HDR Supervisory Team may need to remain the same, or the HDR Student may need to consider withdrawing from the Academic Program and seeking transfer to another institution.

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### 4.2.2 Supervisory relationship breakdown

If either the Student or a member of the supervisory team believes there to be a breakdown in the HDR Supervisor and Student relationship, they should immediately notify the GRS of their concerns. The HDR Coordinator or Dean GRS will attempt to informally resolve the issue. Where a resolution cannot be achieved, an appropriate replacement supervisor or supervisory team will be sought and put into place. Where an appropriate replacement supervisor or supervisory team has not been identified within 10 University Business Days, the Dean (GRS) may require the Student to take a Leave of Absence until the matter is resolved. If no alternative suitable supervision can be found within 20 University Business Days, the Dean (GRS) may discontinue the candidature on the grounds of unavailability of appropriate supervision. In the instance of the unavailability of appropriate supervision, the HDR Student will be offered the opportunity to revise their project to be in line with available supervisors before the discontinuation of candidature.

If a breakdown in the supervisor or supervisory team and Student relationship is caused by an alleged breach of the Student General Conduct Policy, this will be reported and managed in accordance with the Student General Misconduct Procedure. Students who are found to have breached the Student General Conduct Policy may be subject to penalty, including Exclusion from the University and/or cancellation of Enrolment.

If the breakdown in the supervisor or supervisory team and Student relationship is caused by alleged misconduct by an HDR Supervisor, their accreditation may be suspended as per section 4.6 of this procedure.

## 4.3 Eligibility of an HDR Supervisor

HDR Supervisors must (unless an exception is approved in special circumstances by the Dean (GRS)):

- hold a Doctoral degree or be approved by the Dean (GRS) as having equivalent research experience;
- be Research Active as per the University definition (applicable to Principal HDR Supervisors and External HDR Supervisors);
- have relevant knowledge and appropriate experience in the topic area and/or methodology;
- hold current HDR Supervisor accreditation with the University;
- have completed any mandatory supervisor training courses and engaged in recommended training opportunities; and
- have sufficient time and access to adequate resources, taking account of total workload, including the supervision of other HDR Students.

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### 4.3.1 Principal HDR Supervisors

A Principal HDR Supervisor would normally have successfully supervised to completion at least one HDR Student at an equivalent level (Master or Doctoral), as a Principal or Associate HDR Supervisor (with a minimum supervisory load of 20%) in the past five years at the University or another recognised higher education provider and meet the criteria to be deemed Research Active.

A Principal HDR Supervisor must be a UniSQ staff member who holds a continuing, continuing contingent-funding or convertible appointment, or a contract appointment of at least three (3) years' duration. Adjunct or honorary staff can be appointed as Principal HDR Supervisors at the discretion of the Dean (GRS).

In exceptional circumstances, the Dean (GRS) may approve the appointment of a Principal HDR Supervisor where the above criteria have not been met.

Individuals applying to be appointed as a Principal HDR supervisor under the exceptional circumstances rule must be:

- Academic Level B or above;
- currently engaged in doctoral level supervision as an Associate Supervisor (including at least one current student who has completed Confirmation of Candidature); and
- meet the criteria to be deemed Research Active.

Supervisors holding adjunct, emeritus, or honorary positions can be appointed as Principal HDR Supervisors at the discretion of the Dean (GRS).

### 4.3.2 Associate HDR Supervisors

An Associate HDR Supervisor will play an active role in the supervisory process including, as a minimum, providing relevant advice about the research project. An Associate HDR Supervisor may be external to the University.

### 4.3.3 External HDR Supervisors

External HDR Supervisors will normally:

- have specialist skills and relevant professional experience;
- meet the criteria to be deemed Research Active; and
- be provided with details on how to access the Policies and Procedures relating to University HDR candidature by the Principal HDR Supervisor.

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In exceptional circumstances, the Dean (GRS) may approve the appointment of an External Supervisor where the above criteria have not been met.

## 4.4 HDR Supervisor accreditation

The University seeks to ensure high quality supervision for all its HDR Students, which will lead to successful learning outcomes. As part of this process the GRS will maintain a register of University Employees who are accredited HDR Supervisors. Accreditation will be:

- provided at the doctoral or research master level and will be in relation to the Principal HDR Supervisor or Associate HDR Supervisor role; and
- remain in force for a period of five (5) years, after which time an application for reaccreditation will be required.

HDR Supervisors are required to complete the mandatory online HDR supervisor training. On completion of the HDR supervisor training, Employees can seek accreditation through the University's internal systems, which will then be assessed by the Dean (GRS).

In exceptional circumstances the Dean (GRS) may approve accreditation (with supporting documentation) where the above criteria have not been met.

Employees who are accredited as HDR Supervisors will remain on the register unless the following occurs:

- employment or affiliation with the University ceases;
- the Employee's role as an HDR Supervisor is suspended; or
- the Employee fails to gain re-accreditation.

The Dean (GRS) is responsible for ensuring that accredited HDR Supervisors meet the HDR Supervisor accreditation requirements.

## 4.5 Re-accreditation

Re-accreditation normally occurs every five (5) years following the accreditation process, as outlined in Section 4.4 Accreditation.

## 4.6 Suspension of accreditation

An HDR Supervisor may have their accreditation suspended in the following circumstances:

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1. Where it is alleged that an HDR Supervisor has engaged in Misconduct or Serious Misconduct in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement

2. Where it is alleged that an HDR Supervisor has engaged in Research Misconduct in accordance with the Research Code of Conduct: Management of Potential Breaches Procedure

3. Failure to undertake their supervision responsibilities, as outlined in this procedure

4. No longer meets the criteria to be deemed Research Active.

The HDR Coordinator will make a recommendation to the Dean (GRS) to suspend registration of an HDR Supervisor. This recommendation is either based on poor performance or misconduct.

### 4.6.1 Process for suspension of accreditation

#### *4.6.1.1 Performance-based matters*

- The Head of School, College, or Centre must discuss concerns with the HDR Supervisor, and develop a plan and a reasonable timeframe to address concerns with the HDR Supervisor.

- If the Head of School, College, or Centre determines that the performance-related concerns have not improved within the agreed timeline, the Head of Unit may make a recommendation to the Dean (GRS) that accreditation be suspended.

- The recommendation from the Head of Unit must include a plan for managing the HDR Supervisor's current Students.

#### *4.6.1.2 Misconduct-based matters*

- Pending the outcome of an investigation of Misconduct or Serious Misconduct, the HDR Coordinator will liaise with the Dean (GRS) regarding the suitability of the HDR Supervisor's ongoing accreditation.

- The Head of Unit must include a plan for managing the HDR Supervisor's current Students.

### 4.6.2 Decision of Suspension

The Dean (GRS) has the final Decision on suspension of HDR Supervisor accreditation. In making a decision, the Dean (GRS) may consider:

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- a record of HDR Students failing and/or not completing owing to poor supervision, as substantiated by the relevant organisational unit or by the GRS;
- substantiated concerns regarding supervision raised by the relevant organisational unit or the GRS;
- evidence of multiple requests to change HDR Supervisor by HDR Students where the standard of supervision is cited as a significant factor;
- evidence of a pattern of non-compliance with the University's Policies and Procedures;
- concerns regarding supervisory practices that have been substantiated after investigation by the GRS;
- request by the HDR Supervisor to relinquish the supervisory role and the associated workload allocation;
- a substantiated allegation of Misconduct or Serious Misconduct.

Following consideration of the above factors the Dean (GRS) may:

- suspend HDR Supervisor accreditation;
- continue HDR Supervisor accreditation with conditions; or
- continue HDR Supervisor accreditation with no changes.

In cases where HDR Supervisor accreditation is suspended a suspension notice will be issued to the suspended HDR Supervisor by the GRS, with copies provided to the relevant line manager and HDR Coordinator. The suspension notice would normally include the reasons that led to the suspension, the period of suspension, what actions are required to lift the suspension, what arrangements will be made for their existing Students and any other relevant information.

### 4.6.3 Review of Decision

A suspended HDR Supervisor may seek a review of the decision by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

Where a decision is made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) to uphold the suspension, the suspended HDR Supervisor may lodge a Grievance in accordance with the University's Employee Complaints Policy.

## 4.7 Student contact

HDR Students will be expected to be in regular and frequent contact with their HDR Supervisors, normally at least once every 10 to 20 University Business Days.

At the commencement of the Academic Program, HDR Students and their HDR Supervisors are expected to discuss and reach agreement regarding On-campus attendance requirements (if appropriate) and mode and frequency of interaction.

## 5 References

Nil.

## 6 Schedules

This procedure must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

## 7 Procedure Information

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| **Accountable Officer** | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research) |
| **Responsible Officer** | Dean (Graduate Research School) |
| **Policy Type** | University Procedure |
| **Policy Suite** | Higher Degree by Research Student Policy |
| **Subordinate Schedules** | |
| **Approved Date** | 20/2/2024 |
| **Effective Date** | 20/2/2024 |
| **Review Date** | 25/11/2027 |
| **Relevant Legislation** | Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021<br><br>Enterprise Agreement |
| **Policy Exceptions** | Policy Exceptions Register |
| **Related Policies** | Admissions, Enrolment and Graduations Policy<br><br>Assessment Policy<br><br>Code of Conduct Policy<br><br>Employee Complaints Policy |

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| | Flexible Work and Working Arrangements Policy<br><br>Handling Personal Student Information Policy and Procedure<br><br>Marketing and Brand Policy<br><br>Performance Planning and Review Policy<br><br>Privacy Policy<br><br>Professional Development Policy<br><br>Recognition and Reward Policy<br><br>Records and Information Management Policy<br><br>Student Grievance Resolution Policy |
| **Related Procedures** | Admissions Procedure<br><br>Conflict of Interest Procedure<br><br>Employee Complaints Procedure<br><br>Enrolment Procedure<br><br>Flexible Work and Working Arrangements Procedure<br><br>Higher Degree by Research Student Admissions and Enrolments Procedure<br><br>Higher Degree by Research Student Progress Procedure<br><br>Privacy Procedure<br><br>Research Active Procedure<br><br>Website Procedure |
| **Related forms, publications and websites** | Australian Council of Graduate Research Good Practice Guidelines for Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research<br><br>Find a Research Supervisor<br><br>Find a Research Thesis Topic<br><br>HDR Supervisor Training |
| **Definitions** | **Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary** |

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Academic Program

An approved Higher Education Award of the University, consisting of a combination of Courses the successful completion of an offering of which, together with any credit transfers and Exemptions in accordance with the relevant requirements, will fulfil the prescribed requirements for that particular Award.

Admission

The process of submission and assessment of applications for entry to study at the University.

Complaint

A Complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the University, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”.

Employee

A person employed by the University and whose conditions of employment are covered by the Enterprise Agreement and includes persons employed on a continuing, fixed term or casual basis. Employees also include senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University.

Full-Time Study

A Student will be deemed to be in Full-time Study where they are enrolled in at least 75% of the equivalent full-time load (8 Units) during an Academic Year. These Units can be taken in any Study Period during the year.

Grievance

Typically defined as a concern or Complaint raised by an Employee against a process, action, omission or Decision within the responsibility and control of the University which relates to employment or related internal People Portfolio matters, which has or is likely to have an unreasonable negative impact on the ability of an Employee to undertake their duties, or similar impact on their career.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR)

A Research Doctorate or Research Masters program for which at

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least two-thirds of the Student load for the program is required as research work.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Coordinator

The HDR Coordinator is responsible for managing and supporting HDR candidates within an organisational unit. For UniSQ Schools, the HDR Coordinator is the Associate Head of School (Research) or nominee/s.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student

A Student enrolled in an HDR program.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Supervisor

A member of a Student's HDR Supervisory Team. An HDR Supervisor may hold the position of Principal HDR Supervisor or Associate Supervisor.

On-campus Course

A Course, the delivery of which includes regular On-campus activities such as lectures, tutorials, workshops or laboratory/practical sessions. Other Course communication, provision of learning materials and handling of Assessment is normally Online. Students can be expected to attend a Formal Examination at a University approved examination site.

Part-Time Study

Enrolment in less than .75 EFTSL in any year shall be deemed to be Part-Time Study.

Policy

A high level strategic directive that establishes a principle based approach on a subject. Policy is operationalised through Procedures that give instructions and set out processes to implement a Policy.

Procedure

An operational instruction that sets out the process to operationalise a Policy.

Research Active

A "Research Active" individual pursues ongoing Research as a major

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| | focus of their academic activity.<br><br>University<br><br>The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.<br><br>University Business Days<br><br>The days of Monday to Friday inclusive between 9am and 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), with the exclusion of gazetted Public Holidays for the relevant campus location, plus the closure of the University between 25 December and 1 January in the following year inclusive as specified in the Enterprise Agreement, as well as any closure of the University either at one or several campuses in accordance with a direction of the Crisis Management Team. |
| | **Definitions that relate to this procedure only** |
| | **Misconduct and Serious Misconduct**<br><br>Misconduct: means conduct which is not serious misconduct but is nonetheless conduct which is unsatisfactory<br><br>Serious Misconduct: means misconduct of a serious nature and is usually conduct of a type that would make it unreasonable for the University to continue the employment of the Employee concerned. Serious misconduct includes, but is not limited to serious misbehaviour of a kind which constitutes a serious impediment to the carrying out of an Employee's duties or to the Employee's colleagues carrying out their duties; serious dereliction of the duties required of the Employee; or conviction by a court of an offence which constitutes a serious impediment of the kind referred to in this definition. |
| **Keywords** | |
| **Record No** | 15/859PL |

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