Higher Degree by Research Program Design and Review Procedure

1 Purpose

To outline the design and review processes for the University's Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs.

2 Scope

This procedure applies to all HDR programs offered by the University.

3 Procedure Overview

This procedure outlines the design and structure of the University's HDR programs and requirements for quality assurance monitoring.

Processes for accrediting HDR programs are detailed in the Program Accreditation Procedure and the Program Change, Suspension and Discontinuation Procedure.

This Procedure aligns with the:

- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021:* Standard 4.1 Research, Standard 4.2 Research Training

4 Procedures

All new HDR programs are designed and developed in accordance with:

- the Australian Qualifications Framework and associated guidelines and principles; and
- any relevant standards for external recognition, registration or accreditation of the proposed program or for potential Graduates.

All accredited HDR programs are subject to regular monitoring and review, external referencing or other benchmarking activities, and Student feedback to ensure the ongoing viability, quality and strategic alignment of programs offered by the University.

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4.1 Program design

HDR programs are designed so that HDR Students undertake independent supervised study and Research that produces significant and original Research outcomes culminating in a Thesis for independent examination by at least two external expert examiners of international standing. Supervised components of HDR programs are managed in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Supervision Procedure.

4.1.1 Masters degree (Research)

Typically, two-thirds or more of a Research masters degree program will consist of Research and the program will require a minimum of 12 Standard Units to complete (1.5 years full-time).

4.1.2 Doctoral degree

Typically, two-thirds or more of a doctoral degree program will consist of Research and the program will require a minimum of 16 Standard Units to complete (two years full-time). Advanced Coursework may also be included in the program to enhance the HDR Student's capacity to make an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the discipline (or cross-disciplinary field), understanding, or professional practice. The advanced Coursework may support but not replace the Research outcomes.

Cotutelle PhD programs established by the University with international partner Universities are designed in the same way as Doctoral Degrees (Research). Cotutelle PhD programs are established and monitored in accordance with the Cotutelle PhD Program Procedure.

4.2 Program structures

4.2.1 Unit value of HDR programs

HDR programs are composed of Courses, each of which is assigned a Unit value. All HDR programs have a standard, minimum and maximum total of Units to successfully qualify for the conferral of the relevant Award. Refer to Section 4.1.4 of the HDR Student Admissions and Enrolments Procedure for further details.

Table 1: Standard Units required for completion

Qualification Type	AQF Level	Minimum Standard Units required for completion
Master of Research	9	12
Doctor of Philosophy (including Cotutelle PhD programs)	10	16

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4.2.2 Structural elements of Research masters degree programs

Research masters degree programs consist of the following structural elements:

- Core Research Training Coursework units;
- Discipline Study Units;
- Research project units; and
- Examination, including by at least one external examiner.

Discipline Study Units are selected in consultation with the supervisor to reflect additional training complementary to the area of Research undertaken.

4.2.3 Structural elements of doctoral degree programs

Doctoral degree programs, including Cotutelle PhD programs, consist of the following structural elements:

- Research project units; and
- Examination by external examiners, including an oral component.

4.3 Theses and Exegeses

All HDR Students must submit a Thesis (and in the case of a Thesis with Creative Works, an Exegesis) as the ultimate milestone of the HDR program in which they are enrolled. Thesis examination will be managed in accordance with the HDR Thesis Examination Procedure and related policies and procedures.

4.3.1 Thesis

A Thesis:

1. demonstrates possession of advanced knowledge in a specialised field;
2. shows evidence of an original investigation through approach and/or interpretation of findings;
3. shows an ability to make critical use of published work and source materials as well as an appreciation of the relationship between the topic and the wider field of knowledge;

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4. demonstrates competence in independent work or experimentation and an understanding of the techniques and/or approaches that are appropriate to the Research questions;

5. involves a body of work, the scope of which need not be a new line of development, but which shows that the candidate has mastered methodological, analytical, interpretive and ethical skills in producing scholarly output;

6. must be presented in succinct, formal English;

7. for doctoral theses, must demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge, by synthesising ideas developed through empirical Research and extrapolating findings or developing further Research questions supported by evidence-based knowledge frameworks.

4.3.2 Exegesis

Students submitting a Thesis with Creative Works must submit an Exegesis along with their creative works.

An Exegesis:

1. provides a rationale for the methodology of techniques and strategies adopted in the creative works;

2. includes one or more clearly identified Research question/s investigated through the creative work;

3. includes a clear discussion of methodology in alignment with the creative component; and

4. must be presented in succinct, formal English.

4.4 Government funding for HDR programs

Government funding to universities to support HDR programs is differentiated by Field of Education (FoE) to recognise the relative cost of Research Training in high-cost fields compared with low-cost fields, as well as by level of Award. Each HDR Student must be allocated to either a low-cost or high-cost FoE, with the allocation determined by:

- the division in which the largest component of the Thesis is being performed;

- the most relevant group within that division; and

- the most relevant field within that group.

Students must enrol in the correct cost unit to ensure the appropriate funding support for the Research is allocated.

FoE codes are determined by the Australian Government and a list of all FoE codes (and their high-cost or low-cost categorisation) can be found on the Australian Government Department of Education website.

Research Training Program Scholarships are managed in line with the Research Training Program Scholarship Procedure.

4.5 Quality assurance monitoring

The University's Research Training Subcommittee monitors the performance of HDR programs and conducts periodic quality assurance reviews, as appropriate.

The Research Training Subcommittee reports annually to Academic Board, via the Research Committee, in relation to the performance of HDR programs and the outcomes of quality assurance monitoring and Research Training reviews.

Comprehensive reviews of HDR programs are conducted normally every five (5) years but no later than seven (7) years. The reviews are informed by:

- recommendations from panels convened for the purpose by the Dean (Graduate Research School);
- external referencing of the success of Student cohorts and Student satisfaction against comparable programs;
- strategic priorities of the University; and
- the results of regular interim monitoring.

Reviews of HDR programs must address:

- indicators of viability including positioning and role of the program, compliance, and demand;
- the appropriateness of Admission requirements and standards;
- the quality of the supervision provided;

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- candidate support including appropriate orientation and framework support, Research progress reviews, and appropriate support during Thesis preparation and submission;
- provision of training and development for candidates to develop key Research and transferable skills for academic and non-academic careers, including any Coursework components;
- the academic quality and integrity of the examination process;
- candidate experience and outcomes, including equity and diversity in candidate profile, trends in candidate satisfaction, examination outcomes, completion rates and timeliness, and Graduate outcomes; and
- identifiable risks to the sustainable quality of the program, including adequacy of resources, academic and administrative management, available supervision, and required infrastructure.

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

Accountable Officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research)
Responsible Officer	Dean (Graduate Research School)
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	Academic Programs and Courses Quality Policy
Subordinate Schedules	
Approved Date	23/7/2024
Effective Date	23/7/2024
Review Date	23/7/2029
Relevant Legislation	Australian Qualifications Framework

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	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
Policy Exceptions	Policy Exceptions Register
Related Policies	Higher Degree by Research Student Policy Marketing and Brand Policy
Related Procedures	Cotutelle PhD Program Procedure Higher Degree by Research Student Admissions and Enrolments Procedure Higher Degree by Research Supervision Procedure Higher Degree by Research Thesis Examination Procedure Program Accreditation Procedure Program Change, Suspension and Discontinuation Procedure Research Training Program Scholarship Procedure Website Procedure
Related forms, publications and websites	Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) Australian Government Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) Field of Education Types TCSI Higher Education Course Completions (HDR Students) Live Data Report
Definitions	**Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary**
	Admission The process of submission and assessment of applications for entry to study at the University. Cotutelle A doctoral degree program undertaken jointly at UniSQ and an international higher education institution, where a single thesis is submitted for independent examination by both universities. Student receives two testamurs (degree certificates) confirming that the degree is awarded under a cotutelle agreement. Course

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A discrete element of a program, normally undertaken over a single Study Period, in which the Student enrols, and on completion of which the Student is awarded a grade.

Coursework

A method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge and does not include a major research component.

Exegesis

A form of written assessment that accompanies a Student's creative works. The Exegesis will normally provide a rationale for the techniques and strategies adopted in the creative works and situate them in relation to the theoretical and/or historical cultural context.

Graduate

A Student upon whom Council has conferred an Award.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR)

A Research Doctorate or Research Masters program for which at least two-thirds of the Student load for the program is required as research work.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student

A Student enrolled in an HDR program.

Research

Research is the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include the synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

Research Training

A formal course of postgraduate study that leads to the acquisition of advanced skills, techniques and knowledge in the conduct of Research, and requires the production of a substantial original Research Output.

Student

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	A person who is enrolled in a UniSQ Upskill Course or who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled. Thesis Also known as a Standard Thesis, is the material outcomes of a program of research. It is also referred to as a 'dissertation'. Thesis with Creative Works A Thesis with Creative Works includes original work such as multimedia, film, exhibition, performance, musical composition, novel, play or other Faculty approved production, in addition to an Exegesis. Unit This is an indicator of the value of a Course. Most Courses are valued at one Unit. Units are used to track progress towards completing a program. (The term used prior to 2002 to describe a Course) University The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.
	Definitions that relate to this procedure only
Keywords	
Record No	22/212PL

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