



Graduate Research Handbook

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Welcome

Individuals contemplating enrolling in a Higher Degree by Research often face a bewildering array of decisions to make, while Graduate Researchers recently enrolled face a barrage of procedures, policies, guidelines, and other information.

In this Handbook, we have brought together a collection of information that we hope will assist you in making decisions before candidature and will assist in your progression during candidature through to the examination process.

If you have an issue and the solution is not in the Handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the Graduate School on (+61) 2 6626 9147/ (+61) 2 6626 9426 or gradschool@scu.edu.au.

Good luck with your Higher Degree Research.

Dean, Graduate School

Student Handbook

Higher Degrees Research

Please refer to the full Southern Cross University Rules to find the detailed [Rules for Awards](#).

Table of Contents

Welcome.....	1
Common Abbreviates Used	4
1. Introduction	5
Graduate School	5
Office of Research.....	5
The Higher Degrees Research Committee	5
2. Application for Admission: How to apply	6
Step 1: Select Course	6
Determine Your Eligibility	6
English Language Proficiency	6
English Language Proficiency Exemption Guidelines.	6
Step 2: Contact Proposed Supervisors	8
Step 3: Complete an Application for Admission.....	8
3. Admission & Enrolment	9
Step 1: Accept the Offer of Admission	9
International Applicants: Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) and VISA application.....	9
Step 2: Complete the Graduate Researcher and Supervisor Agreement (GRSA) Form.....	9
4. Confirmation of Enrolment document and VISA application	10
Step 1: Accept the Offer of Admission	10
5. Scholarships	11
Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarships.....	11
Higher Degree Research Scholarships.....	11
Bridging Stipends	11
6. HDR Research End-User Engagement Reporting.....	13
What is a research end-user?	13
What is a research end-user engagement?.....	13
External engagement.....	13
7. Internships	13
7. Early Candidature.....	15

Orientation	15
Ethics approval process.....	15
The Human Research Ethics Committee	16
Animal Care & Ethics Committee	16
8. Progression through Candidature	17
Ideal Milestone candidature timeline	17
Enrolment	17
Respect Matters.....	18
Research Integrity Training	18
Riskware Training.....	18
Confirmation of Candidature	19
In Candidature review.....	25
Progress Reports	26
Support Available to You.....	26
Funding Support.....	26
Information Technology.....	26
University Library	26
Generative AI guidelines	27
Changes to conditions of candidature	30
Change to Thesis Topic	30
Change to Supervision Arrangements.....	30
Change to Attendance Type.....	30
Interruption to Candidature.....	30
Sick leave and Recreation leave	30
Leaving Australia Travel form – International students.	31
Extensions to Candidature	31
Withdrawal from Candidature	31
Termination of Candidature.....	31
Transferring your candidature	33
Lapsed Candidature	35
9. Late Candidature.....	36
Prior to Submission: Thesis Requirements.....	36
Preparing the Thesis for Submission	36
Thesis Presentation.....	36
Components of the Thesis	36

Examples of conventional structure of Masters by Thesis and PhD Theses.....	37
10. Submission & Approval of Examiners.....	39
Approval of Examiners	39
Submission of Thesis for Examination.....	39
11. Examination	40
Appointment of Examiners	40
Provision of Thesis to Examiners.....	42
Standards of Examination	42
Examiners' Reports	42
12. Post-Examination & Award of Degree.....	47
PhD & Masters by Thesis	47
13. Lapsed Candidature	48
Resumption from Being a Lapsed Graduate Researcher	48
14. Expired Lapsed Candidature.....	48
Re-admission from expired lapsed candidature.....	48
15. Feedback and Complaints	49

Common Abbreviates Used

ACEC: Animal Care and Ethics Committee

COC: Confirmation of Candidature

HDRC: Higher Degrees Research Committee

HREC: Human Research Ethics Committee

OoR: Office of Research

DHDRT: Director of Higher Degrees Research Training

GRSA: Graduate Researcher Supervisor Agreement

IRMA: HDR Student database used by the Graduate School to monitor HDR Candidature

IRMA NextGen: Database used by HDR Students, Supervisors and the Graduate School to complete coversheets (forms) throughout a candidature. Instructions on how to use IRMA NextGen can be found [here](#).

1. Introduction

Graduate School

The Graduate School, under the leadership of the Dean, Graduate School, supports and administers postgraduate research candidature through:

- centralising all administration procedures to do with candidature, from enrolment through to examination
- quality assurance of Graduate Researchers and their supervisors
- offering comprehensive orientation programs twice per year
- Provide training for supervisors of Graduate Researchers
- assisting with the submission of human research ethics applications
- Provide academic mentoring and support throughout candidature
- facilitating and liaising with the Higher Degree Research Committee

Office of Research

The Office of Research (OoR) provides services to assist researchers, including assistance with establishing commercial terms with industry partners supporting research at Southern Cross University. The OoR can assist with grant applications and budgets and provides the process and pathway through the University in the establishment of research projects. The OoR can assist you with various matters, including scholarship agreements and Student Participation Agreement (intellectual property assignments), especially if you are working on projects funded by an external party. The OoR also acts as a liaison point for gaining legal clearance through the University's Legal Office for these agreements.

The Higher Degrees Research Committee

The Higher Degrees Research Committee (HDRC) is a Sub-Committee of the Academic Board at Southern Cross University and is facilitated by the Graduate School. The HDRC liaises with the Graduate School to formulate policy and procedural proposals to the Academic Board and discuss matters raised by the Faculty Directors of HDR Training.

2. Application for Admission: How to apply

Step 1: Select Course

Choose the course (PhD, Masters by Thesis or Professional Doctorate) and the field of study in which you wish to enrol.

Determine Your Eligibility

Refer to the Rules of the relevant Award for which you want to apply to determine your eligibility and to ensure you have the relevant tertiary qualifications or equivalent experience. You will be required to submit certified copies of all relevant documents with your application. Applicants who have completed degrees overseas must submit Certified English Translations as well as copies of the original documents.

Specific Award Rules can be found and reviewed as follows:

- [Rules relating to awards - Rule 7 - Masters by Thesis Awards](#)
- [Rules relating to awards - Rule 8 - Professional Doctorate Awards](#)
- [Rules relating to awards – Rule 9 - Doctor of Philosophy](#)

If you are unsure whether your qualifications are sufficient to satisfy the minimum requirements, discuss the matter with the Director of Higher Degrees Research Training of the Faculty in which you wish to study. The list of [Directors of Higher Degree Research Training](#) (DHDRT) can be found on the Graduate School's website.

English Language Proficiency

All applicants, except those who are enrolled in a course offered in a language other than English, are expected to be proficient in English comprehension and expression. Applicants whose first language is not English are required to achieve an International English Language Test Score (IELTS) Academic (or equivalent) equal to or above 7.0 with a minimum 7.0 in Writing and no other band less than 6.5). You must submit:

- an original [IELTS](#) Academic (or equivalent) score equal to or above 7.0 with a minimum 7.0 in Writing and equal to or above 6.5 in Reading, Listening and Speaking. This test must have been attained within 12 months of the applicant's commencement of study.
- IELTS equivalent test scores are determined by the Dean of Graduate School and set out in the Higher Degree Research IELTS Equivalence Schedule.

Further details can be found in the Rules relating to awards above.

Please note that without these documents, it is not possible to assess your application if English is not your first language.

English Language Proficiency Exemption Guidelines.

If you are applying to undertake a Higher Degree by Research at Southern Cross University (SCU) and wish to seek an exemption from the IELTS requirements, please refer to the following guidelines. These outline the criteria for discretionary approvals of IELTS exemptions, which must be reported to the SCU Academic Board.

Important: Applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds or countries must provide an IELTS score if they cannot meet the requirements or are not from one of the listed countries.

1. IELTS

Proficiency in English is essential for undertaking a Higher Degree of Research, which requires clear academic writing, comprehensive literature reviews, effective communication with peers and supervisors, successful publication in international journals, and collaboration with global researchers.

Applicants whose first language is not English are required to achieve an International English Language Test Score (IELTS) Academic (or equivalent), with a minimum of:

Writing: 7.0	Reading: 6.5	Listening: 6.5	Speaking: 6.5
--------------	--------------	----------------	---------------

2. Eligibility Criteria for IELTS Discretionary Exemption

English-Speaking Background:

SCU may accept prior studies completed in English to meet their English language requirements where applicants are from an English-speaking country or background. Applicants who have completed a tertiary qualification in English must be:

- Citizens of English-speaking countries, e.g., USA, UK, Canada, or
- Permanent Residents of English-speaking countries, or
- Individuals with a minimum of ten years in an English-speaking country and who have completed secondary or tertiary education in an English-speaking country.

Non-English-Speaking Background:

SCU recognises some academic qualifications completed in English speaking (USA, UK, Canada) and non-English speaking countries such as Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore, Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. An IELTS exemption may be approved at the discretion of the Dean, Graduate School if the applicant's tertiary qualifications are:

- Completed in English, and no more than two years ago at the time of the submitted application at SCU.

Important: - Applicants who are not from or have not completed a qualification in one of the above English and non-English speaking backgrounds or countries must provide an IELTS score.

3. Where the applicant's IELTS score falls short – special consideration

If a applicant's IELTS scores fall just short of the requirements, special consideration can be sought from the Dean, Graduate School, providing the IELTS scores are no less than 6.5 and subject to the following conditions:

- The applicant has a first-authored publication in English
- The applicant has proof of qualifications undertaken in English.
- Proof of participation in a completed or currently ongoing language course is only rarely accepted as proof of proficiency.

Step 2: Contact Proposed Supervisors

The [Higher Degree Research \(HDR\) Register of Supervisor Policy](#) requires that all supervisors of Graduate Researchers at Southern Cross University be registered as approved supervisors on the Southern Cross University HDR Supervisor Register, which is a requirement in order to undertake the role of Principal or Co-Supervisor for a potential or current Graduate Researchers.

Before you start an application for admission to study at Southern Cross University, it is important that you have made contact with a prospective supervisor. This supervisor must:

- have the relevant expertise to supervise you
- be an approved supervisor on the HDR Supervisor Register
- the capacity to supervise
- be willing to be nominated as your Principal Supervisor.

Please use the List of Supervisors in each Faculty to assist you in your decision. If you need assistance with finding an appropriate supervisor, please consult with the appropriate [DHDRT \(contact list\)](#) to discuss possible supervisors.

Step 3: Complete an Application for Admission

After discussing your research project with your proposed supervisors and gaining confirmation that they are willing to supervise your candidature, you can complete the online [Application for Admission](#), which is located on the Graduate School's website. Applications can be made at any time of the year. All required documentation is listed within the online application. Where transcripts are in a language other than English, you must organise to have the documents transcribed into English and certified as correct and true copies of the originals.

After the application is submitted online, it is forwarded to your proposed Supervisors, DHDRT, and Associate Dean (Research) for review and additional supporting documentation prior to being sent to the Graduate School for approval. The Dean, Graduate School, will then review your application for admission and the Graduate School will convey their decision to you in formal communication.

3. Admission & Enrolment

Once the Dean of Graduate School has approved your application, you will receive a formal offer of admission, together with an offer package, including a Graduate Researcher Supervisor Agreement (GRSA) form. There are two steps that need to be taken before you are formally enrolled in your course.

Step 1: Accept the Offer of Admission

To accept the offer, sign the letter of offer in the space provided, and return it, together with the application for a student ID card, to the Student Services or hdrsupport@scu.edu.au. For domestic students, they will need to accept the offer within **1 month of the offer** and enrol within **3 months of receipt of the offer**. For international students, they will need to accept the offer within **3 months of receipt of the offer** and enrol within **six months of the date of offer** unless approval is sought from the Dean for them to enrol at a later date.

Once you have **accepted** this offer, you will nominate a date you wish to enrol in your degree.

On this selected date the Graduate School will initiate your enrolment and send you advice confirming that you are now enrolled in your chosen degree.

From the date of your enrolment, you will have 30 (thirty) days to submit a fully approved GRSA form.

International Applicants: Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) and VISA application

For International applicants, providing you have an appropriate Overseas Student Health Cover policy that covers the duration of your degree, plus an additional 6 months for the examination process, you will be issued a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) document for the purposes of applying for your Student VISA (Subclass 500).

Please note for all VISA enquiries, we advise you liaise directly with the Department of Immigration.

Should you experience VISA application delays, please contact the Graduate School HDRapplication@scu.edu.au. Please note your CoE can only be extended if you have compassionate or compelling circumstances.

More information about the compassionate and compelling circumstances for onshore International student guidelines can be found [here](#). For more information, please refer to your Letter of Offer.

Step 2: Complete the Graduate Researcher and Supervisor Agreement (GRSA) Form

The relationship you develop with your supervisor is possibly the single most important determinant of the success of your candidature. Establishing clear agreements and negotiating expectations from the outset is therefore very important. When you receive the GRSA form with your offer letter, contact your supervisors and arrange to meet to work through the agreement together, or at least discuss it over the phone. Remember you can renegotiate the agreement at any time, especially if conditions change during your candidature. The is completed in the [IRMA NextGen](#) Database. You would have received information on how to log into that database in your confirmation of enrolment. Please ensure you have reviewed the [Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervisor Policy](#) and the [Higher Degree Research Candidature and Supervision - Procedures](#).

4. Confirmation of Enrolment document and VISA application

Once the Dean of Graduate School has approved your application, you will receive a formal offer of admission, together with an offer package, including a GRSA form. There are two steps that need to be taken before you are formally enrolled in your course.

Step 1: Accept the Offer of Admission

To accept the offer, sign the letter of offer in the space provided, and return it, together with the application for a student ID card, to the Student Services or hdsupport@scu.edu.au. For domestic students, they will need to accept the offer within **1 month of the offer** and enrol within **3 months of receipt of the offer**. For international students, they will need to accept the offer within **3 months of receipt of the offer** and enrol within **six months of the date of offer** unless approval is sought from the Dean for them to enrol at a later date.

5. Scholarships

Stipend scholarships are available from three main sources:

- Research Training Program Scholarships Stipend and Fee Offset Scholarships (domestic and international)
- University Fee Offset and Stipend Scholarships – funded by the University
- Externally funded/co-funded Scholarships – funded by Industry

Duration of Scholarships

The maximum duration for all scholarships undertaking a PhD or Masters by Thesis are:

PhD = Three years and three months.

Masters by Thesis = Two years.

No further extensions will be approved.

Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarships

The Graduate School manages the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarships for Graduate Researchers. Graduate Researchers enrolled full time, or individuals applying for HDR study at Southern Cross University, may apply for Commonwealth Scholarships once a year in August, for the commencement of the scholarship in the following year.

Information for applicants, including conditions of the award, and the application form can be found on the [Graduate School's webpage](#) approximately one and a half months prior to the closing date of each round.

More information about Commonwealth Scholarships can be found [here](#).

Higher Degree Research Scholarships

Scholarships offered by the University will be advertised on the Graduate School website. These scholarships are not part of the Research Training Program funded by the Commonwealth Government.

Information for applicant, selection and offer procedures and associated information will be available on the Graduate School website.

Bridging Stipends

The intent is to offer the opportunity, for HDR candidates who have successfully submitted their thesis, to apply for a 3-month additional bridging stipend to write up manuscripts, apply for fellowships and/or undertake further research. The stipend conditions will be the same as an RTP stipend, i.e. full-time commitment with the possibility of 1 day a week's paid employment.

Selection criteria will include but not limited to:

- Timely completion of the Thesis in 3 to 3.5 years. Note that this time frame will exclude periods of personal leave, interruptions and other issues that may have affected the candidature.
- Senior authored publication in a Q1 or Q2 journal during candidature.
- Timely submission of progress reports to supervisors.
- Relevance of the research to the University's research priorities.
- Recommendations from the HDRT Director and ADR.
- External Awards and other recognition of research excellence.
- Narrative on how the stipend will bridge the candidate into the next stage of their career.
- Recommendation from Supervisors.

What are the expected outputs:

- A first-authored publication in a Q1 or Q2 journal
- New data that can lead to further publications down the track
- Job/fellowship applications

The initial program will allocate up to 10 such stipends across a calendar year. Applications will be accepted throughout the year as candidates successfully submit their theses for examination. Only timely submissions will be considered. Applications will be assessed by a panel which will include the DVCR and the Dean of the Graduate School.

6. HDR Research End-User Engagement Reporting

Under the auspices of the Australian Government's Department of Education, reporting requirements for all Higher Education Providers are in place to improve monitoring of the research training system. The new indicators for reporting can be found on the Department of Education website. Accordingly, research end-user engagement is now included in the required data that all universities must collect and report to DESE.

Important: As part of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment requirements, it is now compulsory for all Higher Degree by Research students to report on their own engagement with research end-users.

What is a research end-user?

A research end-user is defined as an individual, community or organisation external to academia that will directly use or directly benefit from the output, outcome or results of your research. Research end-users include businesses, governments, NGOs, communities and community organisations.

Specific exclusions of research end-user are other higher education providers; affiliate organisations; controlled entities or subsidiaries of a higher education provider (such as Medical Research Institutes).

What is a research end-user engagement?

Generally, it is an experience or activity in which the HDR student has undertaken a paid or unpaid placement, internship, fieldwork, training, scholarship funding or joint supervision arrangement where their research will benefit a research end-user organisation via intellectual property or commercial gain.

External engagement

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training has provided definitions for different types of external engagement, Southern Cross University will now be required to only report on three Industry Engagement activities, as follows;

1. PhD or Master research students that are Jointly supervised by a research end-user. i.e. Industry supervisor that is external to academia.
2. PhD students who undertake a Research internship with a research end-user that was agreed within 18 months of course commencement for a full-time student or within 36 month for part-time student.
3. PhD students who undertake a Research internship with a research end-user any time **after** 18 month full-time or 36 month part-time of your course commencement.

Industry Engagement will become an essential part of your candidature. By undertaking an Industry internship or being Jointly supervised by an industry supervisor will not only start to drive early engagement between industry and yourself as research students, it will strengthen the links between the latest research and industry innovation that you are directly involved in. Not to mention making you more employable through skills development and experience after completion of your PhD.

Whether you're an artist, a scientist, a health professional or involved in business and law, you should be looking for ways to engage with industry whilst you are a student.

7. Internships

Supervisors are encouraged to support and guide Graduate Researchers to gain real-world experience through participation in research end-user engagement activities. Research end user engagement

activities are beneficial for Graduate Researchers in helping them broaden their knowledge, skills and experience as well as giving them insights into different sectors, enabling them to make more informed career decisions.

A research internship is defined as a position with a research end-user where a student has undertaken research and development (R&D) related to their higher degree by research (HDR). A research internship can be either paid or unpaid, can form part of an enrolment or be undertaken during a HDR period of suspension.

- A research internship should be undertaken within 18 months from the commencement date of the student's HDR if the student is undertaking a full-time student load (36 months from the commencement date for a part-time student load).
- A written agreement is required and must detail the Research & Development (R&D) activities to be undertaken and the duration of the internship.
The internship must be for a minimum of 3 calendar months in duration, and at least 60 **full-time equivalent (FTE) days of engagement**.
- An eligible internship must be related to the student's area of research.
- A research internship can be either paid or unpaid and can form part of an enrolment or be undertaken during an HDR period of suspension and can be undertaken any time throughout your candidature.

For more information please contact the Graduate School or Manager, Research Internships - hdrinternships@scu.edu.au or hdrsupport@scu.edu.au

7. Early Candidature

Orientation

As early as possible in your candidature, you should attend HDR Orientation, which is a requirement for all Graduate Researchers. If it is not possible for you to attend any program, please apply to the Dean, Graduate School applying for an exemption, stating your reasons, with support from your supervisors.

All newly enrolled students will be sent an invitation to attend one of the two Orientation sessions run each year at the Lismore campus.

Some of the items covered at the Orientation are:

- Introduction to the processes and procedures of candidature
- Introduction to library services
- What makes a good thesis
- Publishing during candidature
- Organising and managing your research
- Research ethics
- Writing in your discipline
- Managing your supervisor

One of the most important aspects of your candidature discussed at Orientation is setting up peer support networks, especially for students who are studying their degrees in isolation. We strongly encourage you to form a group that meets regularly. The main benefits are to support each other on your postgraduate research journey, to maintain accountability to your research goals, to get support for publication, and to maintain passion and interest in your research.

Ethics approval process

It is essential to obtain ethical clearance of your proposed project *before* you begin your research if your research entails work with animals or humans. This requirement is set out by legislative bodies and protects both researchers and the institution. For current application forms, the latest information, and contact details, please visit the [Ethics Website](#).

For both human and animal research, all Southern Cross University staff and students are required to submit an application outlining their proposed research and detailing how the research will address research principles outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* or the *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*.

Please note: all HDR Ethics Applications are to be Submitted with the Principal Supervisor as Lead Investigator.

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the Animal Care and Ethics Committee (ACEC) are directly responsible to the Vice Chancellor for considering the research ethics implications for research involving human participants and animals, respectively. Both HREC and ACEC require approved researchers to comply with monitoring and reporting procedures as communicated once ethics approval has been granted.

The Human Research Ethics Committee

Human research proposals are reviewed, depending on the degree of risk posed to participants and the participant group involved. There is two review processed at the *Southern Cross University* HREC:

Moderate to high-risk research will be reviewed by the full HREC at one of the scheduled HREC meetings. Negligible to low-risk research may be reviewed via an expedited process involving the Chair of the HREC and can be requested at any time. Definitions of the level of risk are found in the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).

Human research is defined as being research that is conducted with or about people, their data or tissue, and involves human beings:

- taking part in surveys, interviews or focus groups
- undergoing psychological, physiological or medical testing or treatment
- being observed by researchers
- researchers having access to their personal documents or other materials
- the collection and use of their body organs, tissues or fluids (eg skin, blood, urine, saliva, hair, bones, tumor and other biopsy specimens) or their exhaled breath
- access to their information (in individually identifiable, re-identifiable or non-identifiable form) as part of an existing published or unpublished source or database
- Please note that all surveys carried out by University staff and students should be presented to the HREC. They may not necessarily require HREC clearance but should be recorded by the HREC secretary.

Animal Care & Ethics Committee

Researchers wishing to undertake any form of animal research are required to lodge an application for research approval on a specific form. All such proposals must be considered by the ACEC.

Animal research is defined as being research that is conducted with or about animals, their data or tissue, and involves animals in:

- being observed by researchers
- being surveyed or otherwise recorded in their natural habitat
- experimental research
- abnormal husbandry or dietary conditions
- collection of blood, tissue or other body samples
- being used for teaching;
- product testing
- feeding trials and field surveys

If you are in doubt as to whether your research requires research ethics approval, you can discuss this with the Secretaries or the Chair of the research ethics committees.

8. Progression through Candidature

As you progress through your candidature, there are a number of processes that will help you stay on track. To allow us to give you the best possible service, please ensure that you:

- a. advise the Graduate School when any of your personal details change, especially changes of address, email or phone details; and
- b. ensure that you check your Southern Cross University email address that is allocated to you at the start of candidature. You can arrange to have an email that goes to your Southern Cross University address diverted to an alternative email address (please contact servicedesk@scu.edu.au for details).

Ideal Milestone candidature timeline

PhD Candidature

- 6 months confirmation of candidature.
- 12 months after confirmation of candidature an in-candidature review.
- **3 years and 6 months thesis submitted for examination.**
- 4 years completion – submission of thesis deposit and verification form to the Graduate School following recommendation of award of degree.

Master by Thesis Candidature

- Masters enrolment.
- 6 months confirmation of candidature.
- 9 months after confirmation of candidature in candidature review.
- **2 years thesis submitted for examination.**
- 2 years 6 months completion - submission of thesis deposit and verification form to the Graduate School following recommendation of award of degree.

Professional Doctoral Candidature

- 1-year course work enrolment.
- Thesis component enrolment.
- At 1 year and 6 months confirmation of candidature.
- 9 months after confirmation in candidature review.
- **3 years thesis submitted for examination.**
- 3 years and 6 months completion - submission of thesis deposit and verification form to the Graduate School following recommendation of award of degree.

Enrolment

As a Doctor of Philosophy or Masters by Thesis Graduate Researcher, there is no need for you to re-enrol with the University each Research Semester. Your candidature is time-based, and therefore you are enrolled until your submission date, except when on an approved interruption.

Graduate Researchers enrolled in a Professional Doctorate are expected to undertake the prescribed coursework units and ensure timely completion of the required units. It is expected this should take students one-year full-time equivalent to complete. Once all Coursework units are successfully completed as detailed in the 'Special Conditions' of the Graduate Researchers letter of offer, the Graduate Researchers will then be eligible to be enrolled into the thesis unit. The course coordinator will advise the Graduate School of a Graduate Researchers eligibility and their successful completion of coursework units. Upon receipt of this advice, the Graduate School will action the enrolment into the thesis unit for the Graduate Researchers in question. Graduate Researchers are expected to complete

the thesis component of the award within 2 years full-time equivalent from the commencement date of their enrolment into the thesis unit.

Respect Matters

It's important that everyone feels safe, supported and comfortable on campus. With the introduction of the new National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV), we all have a role to play in prevention and in strengthening our response towards GBV. This is why we have implemented mandatory completion of the 'Respect Matters' course.

The topics to work through include:

- Understanding gender-based violence and its impact
- Consent, respect and healthy relationships
- Supporting others and the bystander response
- Addressing social drivers, discrimination and cultural factors
- ESafety, safety online
- Racism and Religious Vilification

Key Details:

- Takes approximately **one hour** to complete and includes a **quiz**, with certificates downloadable upon passing that must be submitted to the Graduate School via hdrsupport@scu.edu.au.
- Graduate Researchers who are also SCU staff must complete the training using their **staff account** via SCOUT to ensure accurate compliance reporting.

Research Integrity Training

The Research Integrity Training is a mandatory online module designed to equip Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students with a clear understanding of the principles and responsibilities outlined in the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*. It covers key topics such as ethical research practices, compliance obligations, and responsible data management.

Key Details:

- Takes approximately **one hour** to complete and includes a **quiz**, with certificates downloadable upon passing that must be submitted to the Graduate School via hdrsupport@scu.edu.au.
- Graduate Researchers who are also SCU staff must complete the training using their **staff account** via SCOUT to ensure accurate compliance reporting.

Riskware Training

Riskware is Southern Cross University's incident and hazard management solution, and facilitates the online reporting, investigation and actioning of all incidents and hazards. The Riskware Training video (5 mins) directs you to the website and explains how to report any incidents, and includes instructions on how to download the Riskware app onto your own device.

Note: There is no quiz, simply watch the video and advise the Graduate School via hdrsupport@scu.edu.au.

All training must be completed before Confirmation of Candidature—candidature will not be confirmed until all training is completed.

To access all training modules, please visit your [MYSCU](#), and go to the *Higher Degree by Research (Graduate School)* Information Site.

Confirmation of Candidature

PhD and Masters Graduate Researchers are expected to complete their Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) milestone within 6 months (full-time equivalent) from the commencement of their enrolment.

Professional Doctorate Graduate Researchers are expected to complete this milestone within 6 months (full-time equivalent) from the commencement of their enrolment into the thesis unit.

Extensions will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

CoC Requirements:

- Prior to completing the Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) presentation, Graduate Researchers **MUST** complete the online Research Integrity Training module. To find out more about the requirements of the training, please refer to the [Research Integrity Training Guidelines](#). The Graduate Researcher needs to have successfully completed the Research Integrity training module prior to CoC and include their certificate with their CoC documents. It is expected that all supervisors will also have completed the Research Integrity training module. Failure to comply with either of the above requirements will mean the cancellation of the Confirmation of Candidature presentation. This will mean the presentation has to be rescheduled, and, in some instances, this may lead to the termination of candidature.
- The interim GRSA needs to be reviewed at the Confirmation of Candidature by all parties. If there are any changes to be made, then a new GRSA must be submitted to the Graduate School along with the other CoC documentation for assessment.
- The Graduate Researcher is expected to provide all of the CoC documents to the supervisors and DHDRT at least 2 weeks in advance. It is expected that the Graduate Researchers will be receiving regular feedback from the supervisors while preparing the documentation.
- The Confirmation of Candidature proposal must be submitted through the University's text-matching software Turnitin via the Graduate School Blackboard site prior to being sent to the Confirmation panel.
- The Turnitin report must be sent to the Confirmation panel members together with the research proposal.

The Confirmation of Candidature process requires the Graduate Researcher to fulfil the following elements to a requisite standard.

1) Confirmation of Candidature requires a written research proposal (at least 7,000 words but no more than 10,000 words), a seminar presentation and, as applicable, the fulfilment of any special conditions required by the Dean, Graduate School.

I. The written research proposal must contain the following:

- Cover page;
- Table of contents;
- A 200 word abstract of the proposed project;
- A critical literature review identifying gaps in the knowledge and areas for further study;
- A brief philosophical and/or theoretical framework;
- Hypotheses and/or study aims and objectives, proposed methodology;
- Detailed research plan with a timeline;
- If ethics approvals and other research permits are required (including any specialized WH&S requirements), then an indication of the proposed process and timelines for securing these will need to be provided;
- Any special conditions required by the Dean, Graduate School to ensure the Graduate Researcher attains the requisite HDR standard must also be satisfied.

II. The seminar presentation must:

- Be 20-30 minutes in duration;
- Allow a further 20-30 minutes for questions;
- Be open to other members of staff and other Graduate Researchers
- Where applicable, contain arrangements to enable online Graduate Researchers who cannot attend on-campus to present online through the relevant University online forum.

During question time, the Graduate Researcher must address all questions made by the panel independently. Following question time, the open component of the CoC is closed, and the Confirmation panel meets privately to discuss the written and oral research proposal. The Chair of the CoC panel and external panel member then formulate their recommendation on the outcome of the CoC and complete the report for consideration by the Dean, Graduate School. The Chair of the panel is responsible for oversight of the completion of the report and submission to the Graduate School.

Following the conclusion of the oral presentation of the CoC, the Director Higher Degree Research Training (HDRT), will ensure that all documents are completed, prepared and submitted to the Graduate School for consideration. This will include:

- Confirmation of Candidature document – i.e. the written research proposal submitted to the panel; and
- Abstract; and
- Copy of presentation slides; and
- Confirmation of Candidature report; and
- The confidential report; and
- The revised SCA or confirmation that the original SCA still applies.

The Graduate Researcher will not be informed of the outcome of the Confirmation of Candidature until such time as the Dean, Graduate School has reviewed and considered the Confirmation of Candidature documentation and the panel's recommendation. This will be no more than two weeks after the presentation.

Once the Dean, Graduate School considers the documentation the Graduate School will advise the Chair of the panel (Director, HDRT) and supervisors of the outcome. It is the responsibility of the supervisors to then advise the Graduate Researcher of the outcome of their Confirmation of Candidature.

The Confirmation panel will consist of:

- Director Higher Degree Research Training (as Chair) - noting only the Chair and external panel member can vote on the Confirmation of Candidature outcome and the ADR if they are on the panel;
- External panel member^{1, 2}
- Principal Supervisor;
- Co-supervisor(s);
- As applicable, any other person recommended by the Dean, Graduate School.

Note: if the DHDRT is a supervisor, the Deputy DHDRT / Associate Dean (Research) or Delegate must act as the Chair of the Confirmation panel.

¹ *An independent panel member can be someone who is (obviously) independent of the Graduate Researcher and supervisors and can add value to the CoC presentation. This person can be from Academia (from SCU or another University). If from SCU, they must be a current academic or Adjunct. They can also be from industry. If from industry, they must be well placed in that industry to be able to provide the critical feedback required to assist the Graduate Researcher in progressing with their candidature. They must also hold an equivalent or higher qualification than the Graduate Researcher is undertaking the presentation for. The independent panel member, must review the submitted work prior to the presentation and contribute feedback and input to the assessment of the Graduate Researcher's work. They have the same voting and input rights as the Director/Chair of the panel.*

²*Please refer to the Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Confirmation of Candidature panel Members.*

For noting:

- The supervisors will attend the Confirmation of Candidature to provide additional context and information to the Chair and external panel member/s in order to reach a recommendation. The supervisors do not have a vote on the outcome of the CoC;
- In order to address perceived imbalances of power when the supervisor of a Graduate Researcher is an Executive Dean, the Associate Dean Research (ADR) also sits on the Confirmation panel. If the ADR is also one of the supervisors, then the Dean, Graduate School will sit on the panel as a non-voting observer;
- The Chair of the panel is the Director HDRT or delegate. They are responsible for preparing the Report and circulating to the panel for sign off;
- The external panel member provides an objective and critical overview of the Graduate Researcher and project. They preferably ought to be research active and drawn from outside of the University, with no close links to the Graduate Researcher, project or supervisors;
- The choice of external panel member needs to be endorsed by the Faculty HDRT Director and approved by the Dean, Graduate School;

- Only the Chair and external panel member can vote on the Confirmation of Candidature outcome and the ADR if they are on the panel.
- The Chair and external panel member will also have a private discussion with the Graduate Researcher to assess if the supervisors are both suitable and engaged. This assessment will be documented in a separate confidential report submitted to the Graduate from the Chair of the panel and will not be shared with the supervisors. This should be made clear to the Graduate Researcher.

The seminar presentation provides additional context for answering the above questions and is not assessed in its own right.

Graduate Researcher will be made aware of these questions in their orientation booklet. They will be expected to prepare the CoC documentation and presentation with these in mind.

The responsibility and role of the Principal Supervisor in the CoC process:

The Principal Supervisor is the academic and administrative leader in the supervisory team. It is very important that the Principal Supervisor along with all co-supervisors are involved in determining (with the Graduate Researcher), whether or not the Graduate Researcher is ready for Confirmation. When a Graduate Researcher is ready for CoC, the Principal Supervisor should advise the Director Higher Degree Research Training accordingly.

The Principal Supervisor's responsibilities are then:

- I. To identify a potential **external expert to sit on the Confirmation panel**, and obtain agreement from this person to participate in the Confirmation of Candidature;
- II. To advise the Director HDRT of the identity of the proposed external member and co-supervisors for the Graduate Researcher;
- III. To provide the Director with the CV of the nominated external member, and a statement that there is no conflict of interest (please refer to conflict of interest guidelines). The Principal Supervisor will also be required to provide a brief outline of the expertise/experience of the external panel member. The DHDRT will assess the suitability of the proposed external panel member and advise the Principal Supervisor of any concerns with the suitability of the proposed panel member;
- IV. To inform the Director HDRT of possible dates for Confirmation (wherein the Graduate Researcher, the supervisory team and the external member are available) and confirm the mode that the external examiner will be attending (e.g. in person, by Skype/zoom or video conference, etc).

The responsibilities and role of the Director HDRT in the Confirmation of Candidature process:

The Director of Higher Degree Research Training is responsible for providing the following advice and documentation to the Graduate School so they can book and advertise the Confirmation:

- The identity of the Graduate Researcher undertaking the Confirmation.
- The date and time they would like the Confirmation to be held.

- The panel members for the Confirmation so the Graduate School can copy the panel members into the confirmation invitation.
- Provide the 200-word abstract of the research proposal so that the Graduate School can advertise the Confirmation to all HDR supervisors and HDR Graduate Researchers.
- When booking a Confirmation of Candidature presentation, the DHDRT will supply a zoom code and password for the presentation to the Graduate School. This needs to be either added to the COC request form or an email invitation sent to hdrexamination@scu.edu.au (please do not send to hdrsupport).
- The Director HDRT will collate and distribute the paperwork to the Confirmation panel and the Graduate School **at least seven days ahead** of the scheduled date.
- The Director must review the submitted work prior to the presentation and contribute feedback and input to the assessment of the Graduate Researcher's work. They have the same voting and input rights as the supervisors and the external panel member on the panel.
- The Director HDRT is the Chair and also provides an independent assessment. The Chair has the casting vote on any issues.
- The Director HDRT is responsible for the oversight of the completion of the confirmation report/form and notifying the Graduate School of the outcome.

The Confirmation of candidature Presentation and Process:

1. The Graduate Researcher will present their 20 - 30 minutes oral presentation to the panel;
2. The panel will then ask the Graduate Researcher questions on the presentation (allow 20-30 minutes);
3. Once the questions are concluded, staff and students attending the CoC will be asked to leave;
4. The Graduate Researcher will be asked to leave;
5. The Chair of the panel will have a discussion with the external panel member and the supervisors regarding the CoC;
6. Following the panel discussion, the supervisors of the Graduate Researcher may or may not be asked to leave for the final discussion regarding the CoC outcome. This will be at the discretion of the Chair of the panel;
7. The Chair of panel and the external panel member will then ask the supervisors to leave and invite the Graduate Researcher in for a private discussion on supervision;
8. Following the private discussion on supervision, the Chair of the panel will provide the Graduate Researcher with feedback on their presentation and inform them of the next steps i.e. The report will be prepared, the external panel member and Chair will sign it and then the is sent to the Dean, Graduate School for consideration along with the other supporting documentation;
9. Following the Dean's consideration of the confirmation of candidature documentation, the supervisors and Director HDR are informed of the outcome of the Confirmation of Candidature by the Graduate School, this notification will include a copy of the Confirmation of Candidature report;
10. The supervisors and Director, HDR then have the responsibility of informing the Graduate Researcher of the outcome.

The Confirmation of Candidature Report:

- I. As a guide, it is suggested the report includes whether or not the Graduate Researcher has demonstrated a capacity to fulfil the following requirements:
 - Did the Graduate Researcher articulate a clear and explicit research question (s) and is it the panel's assessment that the research question is appropriate?
 - Did the Graduate Researcher demonstrate appropriate knowledge of their proposed research area?
 - Was the literature review comprehensive and appropriate for the topic being pursued?
 - Did the Graduate Researcher clearly articulate the gaps in the knowledge that their research will address and the significance of investigating the gaps?
 - Did the Graduate Researcher demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the methodology to be used and were the methods and research design clear and appropriate for the topic being pursued?
 - Where an Ethics application will be required, are there any potential ethics issues and is the Graduate Researcher aware of them?
 - In answering the panel questions, did the Graduate Researcher demonstrate clear logical and independent thinking?
 - Was the action plan and timeline feasible and consistent with a timely completion?
- II. The Confirmation Report must be submitted to the Dean, Graduate School with a recommendation that candidature is:
 - Confirmed, with no further work required; or
 - Confirmed, with changes recommended by the committee to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor; or
 - Conditionally confirmed after major revisions to the literature review and research plan as recommended by the panel and made within 3 months to the satisfaction of the Confirmation panel (resubmission and final sign-off to be coordinated by the Chair of the Confirmation panel); or
 - Not confirmed, but the Graduate Researcher is required to revise and resubmit their paper and make another presentation within 6 months for Doctor of Philosophy Graduate Researcher s, and within 4 months for Masters by Thesis and Professional Doctoral Graduate Researcher s; or
 - Remedial Action: Remedial action or recommended transfer to Masters by Research (if Confirmation is for PhD); or
 - Not Confirmed, and candidature is terminated.

Queries in relation to the confirmation of candidature process should be directed to the Director

In Candidature review

A formal In-candidature review for all HDR student's post-confirmation is now a requirement for all HDR Graduate Researchers.

For PhD Graduate Researchers, an In-candidature review would be 12 months post Confirmation of Candidature (full-time equivalent).

For Masters by Research Graduate Researchers, an in-candidature review would be 9 months post Confirmation of Candidature (full-time equivalent).

For Professional Doctorate Graduate Researchers, an in-candidature review would be 9 months post Confirmation of Candidature (full-time equivalent).

The In-Candidature Review Panel will include:

- The principal supervisor
- The co-supervisors
- The Director HDRT

An external panel member (*it is recommended that where possible the same external panel member for the Confirmation of Candidature will be the external panel member for the In-Candidature Review).

The format for the In-Candidature Review will be

- a) A written document containing draft chapters of the thesis.
- b) An oral presentation of a minimum of 15 minutes (required length to be determined by the panel) which addresses:
 - What was approved at the Confirmation of Candidature- (research aims, methodology, design, and timeline).
 - The progress achieved to date, against the timeline provided at Confirmation of Candidature.
 - Discussion of any barriers/ issues or changes to the research project.
 - A detailed timeline for completion and submission of the thesis with clear and measurable milestones.
- c) Any other written material as requested by the panel.

The outcome of the In-Candidature review will include:

- A brief report highlighting any issues identified, which will be signed by the In-Candidature review committee members and submitted to the Graduate School for recording against the student's record.
- Where further support, training or intervention is required, a detailed plan and timeline (to the due date of submission) will be written and submitted together with the above-mentioned report.

Progress Reports

Once you have been accepted into your candidature, you are expected to make satisfactory progress toward the completion of your degree. Per Southern Cross University Rules, you are expected to report on your candidature every six months by filling in a progress report from the commencement of your degree that is signed off by your Supervisors and DHDRT. Please note that progress reports will be required even when you have recently completed your confirmation of candidature or are about to complete your confirmation of candidature, and regardless of your enrolment type (e.g. full time or part time).

The only exception for any given period is if you are on an SCU approved Interruption for the majority of that period. By seeking current information related to research progress, the report requires a student to reflect and plan accordingly. It also provides Faculties and the Graduate School with an opportunity to assess whether a student may require additional assistance.

The major purpose of progress reports is to make the Graduate School aware of difficulties you may be having related to your research and/or supervision. Progress reports also allow the Graduate School to ensure that your supervisors and DHDRT are aware of any problems that need to be addressed, that you are maintaining regular contact with your supervisors, and that you are making satisfactory progress in accordance with your research timeline. The Graduate School makes every effort to attend to problems you or your supervisors raise. If you or your supervisors wish to submit a confidential report, you may do so in addition to the required progress reports by emailing manager.gradschool@scu.edu.au.

Support Available to You

While the Graduate School assists in the provision of appropriate resources to support quality research, the Faculty in which you are studying will supply the main resources for your research.

Funding Support

It is important to establish from the outset of your program, that you have funds to support the research you will need to do. Most Faculties have small amounts of funds available to support research students with costs such as postage, phone calls, travel, thesis binding and printing. Make sure you find out what is available from your Faculty and include this in the GRSA form. More expensive projects may need to be supported by research grants. For help with research grants, please contact the [Grants and Contracts](#) team within the Office of Research.

Information Technology

To apply for your student ID card please click on the following link [Student Id card](#). You will need this in order to use the Student printers on campus.

If you are eligible for unlimited printing please contact servicedesk@scu.edu.au to activate your printing access.

To determine if you are eligible to receive a computer provided by the University please refer to the Technology Services [Postgraduate students and adjuncts staff computer supply](#).

University Library

The University Library provides a range of resources, services, training, and personal assistance for locating information within the Library or obtaining information from outside the collection. The [Library homepage](#) is the access point for all library services. There is a specific section for Research and Postgraduate Support within the Library's website.

Each Faculty has a [Liaison Librarian](#), who is a subject specialist and can help you identify relevant databases, journals and other resources. An individual consultation with your Liaison Librarian is an excellent place to start your research.

Make use of the document supply service for access to material not available in the Library itself or on the Library's subscribed databases. Any article can usually be supplied within 2-3 days.

EndNote™

Southern Cross University has a site license for EndNote, an essential tool for all academics, which is available free to Southern Cross University staff and postgraduate students. EndNote is bibliographic database software that allows you to link citations to your bibliography, format your references in any style consistently and can also be used as a repository for your literature notes. The Library provides EndNote training, which we strongly recommend that you attend as early as possible in your candidature.

Generative AI guidelines

Guidelines for HDR Graduate Researchers – use of Artificial Intelligence tools

Overview

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can create content or data based on analysis of existing information. Researchers must be aware that when using open-source tools, text provided as inputs is offered without copyright or other protection. Gen AI lacks the ability to rationalise, perceive or critique and therefore can produce inaccurate or biased content.

Digital assistance tools such as ChatGPT by default keep the prompts that are entered and may do so even if you request otherwise. If the prompt entered into a digital assistance tool contains confidential information or concerns an innovation of yours, even temporary retention of the prompt by the tool may mean that the text is no longer confidential and the IP is no longer owned by you or the University. Therefore, copyrighted text, confidential information or intellectual property should not be entered into an online digital assistance tool unless that tool is operated by the University. Furthermore, any text generated by a digital assistance tool may be in breach of copyright or other protections and should be used with caution.

The guidance provided to HDR Graduate Researchers regarding the use of generative AI is more nuanced and more flexible than that provided to the coursework Graduate Researchers. The guidelines for HDR Graduate Researchers primarily emphasise the critical, responsible, and ethical use of generative AI while fulfilling their research activities, such as writing research articles, thesis, and Confirmation of Candidature documents.

These guidelines are developed for HDR Graduate Researchers in recognition of the inevitable use of generative AI in research carried out by HDR Graduate Researchers. These serve as an addendum to the existing SCU [Academic Integrity Framework](#) which is focused primarily on educating students about the use of generative AI. It should also be considered in consultation with the [Research Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#) and the Research Integrity Guidelines and relevant research policies.

Guidelines:

1. Doctoral Graduate Researchers are reminded that the purpose of a doctoral degree is to develop new knowledge and that their thesis should make an original contribution to knowledge.
2. All creative content by an individual Graduate Researcher must be their **own** work, unless otherwise acknowledged. Where a Graduate Researcher uses generative AI software such as ChatGPT to generate research content and produce creative work, **these are NOT their own ideas**, research, and/or analysis, and hence, wherever used, this must be clearly and overtly **acknowledged**.
3. Graduate Researchers must be aware of the **Ethical, Privacy, Copyright and Intellectual Property** concerns and their associated implications arising from the use of AI tools. The underlying mechanism of these AI tools is designed so that the information or data fed into them is captured by the tool and potentially used for training future products. In other words, indirectly, your data or research, once fed into the AI tool, may be released in the public domain without your explicit knowledge. It can then be used by others before you have published it. Alternatively, it may result in a breach of ethics requirements and/or research integrity

protocols, particularly for projects involving sensitive data which is confidential. Furthermore, it can result in transmission of sensitive data outside of Australia, even if it is restricted, as the AI services may be hosted on servers located in other countries.

4. There are strong concerns related to **bias** caused by generative AI tools. For example, use of generative AI as a brain-storming tool can result in bias based on inputs from the human user, to influence human judgement by incorporating this biased content into AI generated output.
5. For **research grant** applications, all members of the University, including Graduate Researchers will be guided by the ARC and NHMRC guidelines.
6. As an author, it is the responsibility of the Graduate Researchers to ensure that, for any research **publication or creative output**:
 - All AI generated material in the preparation/generation of their research content, must be appropriately acknowledged and cited in accordance with University's research policies (mentioned above). Since the information obtained from generative AI is not published anywhere (although it may be derived from published sources), its citation can become problematic. Content sourced from AI must be properly cited.
 - The authors are **fully responsible** for academic integrity and accuracy of their publications. Note that a generative AI tool CANNOT be considered as a co-author and cannot be assumed to be responsible for content.
 - The authors must be fully aware of, and familiar with, the AI related **rules of SCU University as well as the specific journal**, or equivalent, in which they wish to publish. While some journals might allow use of text generated by AI, some others (e.g., *Science*) do not allow its use unless express approval is obtained from the publishers.
 - The authors must be aware of the **Intellectual Property (IP)** issues associated with the use of AI. For example, images generated by AI systems such as ChatGPT cannot be used unless IP issues (e.g. express permission from publishers) are obtained.
7. Graduate Researchers must ensure they are completely informed of details of using AI by carefully reading the comprehensive information provided by TEQSA guidelines.
8. Knowingly using generative AI tools, either directly or via third party, to generate/write/produce any work (paid or unpaid), without proper acknowledgement of the source, is tantamount to deliberate **academic and research misconduct**. All Graduate Researchers who fail to follow the above guidelines may become subject to the penalties outlined in the University's academic misconduct policies.
9. In order to quote the output of a digital assistance tool that has provided content, it is recommended that:
 - Authors undertake the necessary due diligence to establish the veracity of the generated material, where appropriate;
 - The material be subject to a plagiarism check, as generative AI output can be a close paraphrase of another source;
 - The material be subjected to a copyright infringement check, as generative AI may produce outputs protected by copyright law;
 - A footnote be used instead of an in-text citation, stating the tool used, the version (if available), the date on which it was used, and the exact text of the prompt;
 - Authors need to be explicit as to which material, such as specific passages of text or images, were created or modified by AI tools.

Beyond editing assistance and content assistance for text, it should be noted that the use of digital assistance tools to falsify or fabricate (in the sense of 'inventing in order to deceive') data is a breach of [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 | NHMRC](#).

Graduate Researchers should be aware that unacknowledged use of digital assistance tools to generate or alter text that authors imply is their own may constitute a breach of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 | NHMRC](#) . Even when the use of digital assistance tools for content assistance is acknowledged, this may impact the degree to which the work is considered their own (with impacts on thesis examination) or trigger plagiarism concerns.

Additional resources:

- [GenAI Practice Guide Signals of and How To Assess Unacceptable Use of GenAI](#)
- [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#)
- [Academic Integrity Framework - About - ACU - Southern Cross University \(scu.edu.au\)](#)
- NHMRC - [Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) in Grant Applications and Peer Review](#)
- TEQSA - [Higher Education good practice hub: Artificial Intelligence](#)

Changes to conditions of candidature

During the period of your candidature, there are likely to arise in situations where the conditions of your candidature set down at the time of your enrolment need to change. The following types of changes all require you to complete a Change to Conditions of Enrolment form, available from the [IRMA NextGen](#) database and require the approval of the supervisor, DHDRT and the Graduate School:

Change to Thesis Topic

If you need to change your topic, you will need to check whether it entails a change to your Supervisors or the Faculty in which you are enrolled. This can have funding implications, so it is important to be clear on the form whether these changes follow from your decision to change your topic. For international students this needs to be carefully discussed as it may have implications on your ECoE or your Visa.

Change to Supervision Arrangements

If you need to change one (or more) of your supervisors, both the new supervisor and the supervisor who is being replaced will need to sign off. You also may wish to change who is your principal supervisor and who is your co-supervisor or associate supervisor. You will need to complete change to supervisor coversheet in [IRMA Nextgen](#). You then need to wait until it has been fully approved before completing a new GRSA (previously a Supervisor Candidate Agreement coversheet) coversheet.

Change to Attendance Type

If you want to change your enrolment from internal to external (or vice versa) or from full to part-time (or vice versa), you can apply to do so by filling out a coversheet for a change to conditions of enrolment through [IRMA NextGen](#).

Interruption to Candidature

Interruptions to candidature will not be considered for Graduate Researchers prior to confirmation of candidature. If extenuating circumstances exist, a case can be made to the Dean, Graduate School for special consideration. It should be noted, that if an interruption to candidature is approved by the Dean, Graduate School due to extenuating circumstances, the period of interruption cannot exceed 3 months.

Interruptions to candidature subsequent to the successful completion of confirmation of candidature need to be submitted through [IRMA NextGen](#) and be fully approved by your supervisors and the DHDTR prior to being considered by the Dean Graduate School or the Manager Graduate School. Graduate Researchers need to provide a valid reason in order for a request to interruption to candidature to be considered. It is not possible to apply for an interruption to your candidature retrospectively. Interruptions of 12 months or longer will require approval from the Dean, Graduate School. If you are on a scholarship you will need to notify the Graduate School and dorfinance@scu.edu.au so that the scholarship can be suspended.

Graduate Researcher's approved an interruption to their candidature should be advised that all ethics approvals, or any other relevant approvals in relation to their candidature are suspended for the period that they are on interruption, noting that whilst you are on interruption, you are no longer considered to be an enrolled student for the duration of the interruption.

Sick leave and Recreation leave

All students are required to notify the Graduate School of any leave from their School. Students wishing to take sick leave or Recreation leave during their candidature will need to complete an application for Sick leave or Recreation leave form which must be submitted to the Graduate School. For Scholarship recipients please refer to the [Higher Degree Research Scholarships Policy](#) Section 4. To submit any leave request please do so through [IRMA NextGen](#) and a change to condition of enrolment coversheet.

Leaving Australia Travel form – International students.

There is a coversheet that is required to be completed by International Graduate Researchers who plan to travel away from the University/Campus for more than 72 hours (3 days), regardless if you are on a Stipend Scholarship or not.

The purpose of this form is to inform the Graduate School of your travel plans especially if you are intending on travelling back to your home country for a short period of time. Normally International students would not be permitted to travel unless they have successfully completed their confirmation of candidature

You will remain enrolled into your course of study and must maintain satisfactory progress whilst away from the University. Please note that this application, if approved does not extend the period of your candidature.

You must strictly abide by the approved start and end dates of your intended absence from the University or Campus. Noting that International Graduate Researchers are expected to complete their course of study without any interruptions or Leave of Absence, unless there are compassionate or compelling circumstances, of which a Change to Conditions of enrolment coversheet would need to be completed and approved by the Dean, Graduate School.

Extensions to Candidature

If you wish to apply for an extension to your candidature beyond the due date for completion, you will need to complete an change to conditions of enrolment coversheet via [IRMA NextGen](#) at least two months *before* the normal term of your candidature expires. While you may choose to seek the comments of your principal supervisor before submitting your application, it remains your responsibility to ensure the application reaches the Graduate School 2 months before your candidature end date.

All extensions to candidature require the approval of the Dean Graduate School. Please be aware that extensions are only provided in exceptional circumstances beyond your control. If your candidature is taking longer than you expected and does not involve exceptional circumstances, consider taking an interruption before your candidature expires.

Please note that you must have your progress reports up to date before an application for extension will be considered.

Withdrawal from Candidature

If you wish to withdraw your candidature for any reason, there a withdrawal form Candidature coversheet located in [IRMA NextGen](#).

Please be aware that your student email address will be deactivated immediately once your withdrawal is processed by the Graduate School.

Termination of Candidature

Be assured we make every effort to ensure that any problems are dealt with before taking the step of terminating candidature, provided you keep us and your supervisors informed of your progress. However, it is important for you to know that candidature can be terminated under certain circumstances which include:

- failure to have your candidature confirmed at the required time.
- if, in the opinion of the supervisors, the DHDRT, and the Associate Dean (Research), you have not made satisfactory progress.
- if you have failed to submit progress reports or have made no contact with your supervisors or the Graduate School for a period of 12 months or more, despite repeated attempts to contact you.
- inability to proceed with candidature as evidenced by multiple interruptions.

- if you make repeated applications for interruption without any indication that your candidature is likely to be completed within a reasonable time frame.
- if your candidature has expired without any contact from you.

Please be aware that your student email address will be deactivated immediately once your termination is processed by the Graduate School.

Transferring your candidature

Doctoral Graduate Researchers may transfer at any time into a Master by Thesis degree if the project is suitable and the request is supported by the principal supervisor and Associate Dean (Research).

Masters by Thesis Graduate Researchers who meet the relevant admission criteria to undertake a doctoral degree under the [Rule 8 \(Professional Doctorate\)](#) or [Rule 9 \(PhD\)](#) may transfer at any time into a doctoral degree if the project is suitable and the request is supported by the principal supervisor, Director, Higher Degree Research, and Associate Dean (Research).

International Graduate Researchers

Any International Graduate Researchers wishing to transfer courses must be aware of any impact a transfer may have on their student visa. As an international onshore Graduate Researcher, it is your responsibility to ensure your student visa is valid for the entire candidature. It should include an extra six months for the marking of your thesis. You are also required to ensure your Overseas Health Cover (OSHC) matches your visa dates.

The Graduate School will issue the transferring Graduate Researcher with a new electronic confirmation of enrolment (eCoE), which will outline the remaining duration of their candidature. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Researcher to ensure their visa is valid for however long the Graduate Researcher has left in their “new” degree.

All Graduate Researchers need to make contact with the Department of Home Affairs to check their visa status and any conditions on their visa that may be applicable when transferring.

Impact on Research Training Program Scholarships

If a domestic student (Australian or New Zealand citizen, or Australian permanent resident) has exhausted their Research Training Program Fee Offset Scheme entitlement but remains enrolled, the Commonwealth government will no longer fund the candidature, and the cost of maintaining the candidature will need to be borne by the academic unit supporting the transfer.

Transfer into a Masters by Thesis Degree from a Doctoral Degree

Application for transfer from a Doctoral degree to a Masters by Thesis degree should be made via [IRMA NextGen](#) to. Once fully approved at the Faculty level it will then go to the Dean, Graduate School for consideration.

An application to change from Doctoral candidature to Masters by Thesis candidature must:

- a. describe the circumstances leading to the request;
- b. describe the work completed and remaining to be done;
- c. define a timetable for completion of the work and the Masters by Thesis degree; and
- d. confirm that the proposed Masters by Thesis degree is in an equivalent field of research to that conducted for the Doctoral program.

Approval will not be granted unless the supervisors, Director, Higher Degree Research and Associate Dean (Research) have certified that continuing supervision and research support arrangements are satisfactory, or have advised of new arrangements as appropriate.

The period of candidature already completed at Doctoral level will be deemed completed against the Masters by Thesis. A student who, in order to complete the new program, will exceed the maximum period of candidature applicable to that program, must apply for an extension to candidature. Normally,

the new completion date will be extended by no more than twelve months (full time equivalent) from the date of effect of the change.

Transfer into Doctoral Degree from Masters by Thesis Degree

Application for transfer from a Masters by Thesis degree to a Doctoral degree should be made via [IRMA NextGen](#) to. Once fully approved at the Faculty level it will then go to the Dean, Graduate School for consideration.

For Graduate Researchers seeking transfer into a Doctoral award on the basis of non-formal or informal learning (where permitted by [Rules Relating to Awards Rule 8](#) or [9](#)), the Graduate Researcher must have demonstrated the ability to undertake research at doctoral level as follows:

- a. a substantial written report will be required (noting this could be provided through the normal doctoral confirmation process);
- b. the Associate Dean (Research) must be able to certify that the Graduate Researcher has achieved the required academic standard for admission under the relevant Rules;
- c. the supervisors must be able to demonstrate that they are eligible to supervise at the PhD level;
- d. the project must be suitable for a doctoral program, and the transfer must be supported by the principal supervisor, Director, Higher Degree Research and the Associate Dean (Research); and
- e. the applicant must demonstrate that they now meet the admission criteria for entry into Doctoral candidature.

Transfer will normally only be permitted after the first full year of candidature in the Masters by Thesis degree (or part - time equivalent).

Where possible, the transfer process will align with the confirmation of candidature process so that the Graduate Researcher does not need to complete confirmation for both a Masters by Thesis and a doctorate. All doctoral Graduate Researchers must have completed confirmation at that level.

In the case of a Masters by Thesis Graduate Researcher who wishes to combine the transfer and confirmation processes:

- a. supervisors, supported by their Director, Higher Degree Research and Associate Dean (Research) may nominate Masters by Thesis Graduate Researchers as having demonstrated the potential to be transferred to doctoral enrolment. A formal recommendation with supporting documentation must be recorded with the Graduate School;
- b. Graduate Researchers so nominated can have their Masters by Thesis confirmation process deferred by the Faculty/College. They will be required to go through a doctoral confirmation period of at least 6 and no longer than 10 months full-time equivalent or 12 to 20 months if enrolled part-time;
- c. if the confirmation committee judges that the quality of the Graduate Researcher's confirmation document, presentation and response to questions from the committee indicates that the Graduate Researcher is capable of completing a doctoral degree, then the panel can recommend to the Dean, Graduate School that the Graduate Researcher be transferred to doctoral enrolment;
- d. if the confirmation performance is judged to indicate capacity to complete a Masters by Thesis but not a doctoral degree, then the panel may recommended that the Graduate Researcher's enrolment in the Masters by Thesis be confirmed in accordance with [Rules Relating to Awards Rule 7](#).
- e. if the confirmation performance is below both Doctoral and Masters by Thesis standard, the Graduate Researcher may be offered an opportunity to try again after three months.

In the case of (e, above) following the second attempt the confirmation committee will make one of the following recommendations to the Dean, Graduate School:

- a. if the confirmation committee judges that the quality of the Graduate Researcher's confirmation document, presentation and response to questions from the committee indicates that the Graduate Researcher is capable of completing a doctoral degree, then the committee can recommend to the Dean, Graduate School that the Graduate Researcher be transferred to doctoral enrolment;
- b. if the confirmation performance is judged to indicate capacity to complete a Masters by Thesis but not a doctoral degree, then the committee may recommend that the Graduate Researcher's enrolment in the Masters by Thesis will be confirmed in accordance with [Rules Relating to Awards Rule 7](#).
- c. if the confirmation performance is below both Doctoral and Masters by Thesis standard the committee can recommend the following outcomes in accordance with [Rules Relating to Awards Rule 7](#) Part G with respect to Masters by Thesis candidature:
 - i. remedial action in accordance with [Rules Relating to Awards Rule 7](#) Part G; or
 - ii. recommendation to terminate candidature in accordance with [Rules Relating to Awards Rule 7](#) Part G.

Lapsed Candidature

[In accordance with Southern Cross University Rules](#), a Graduate Researcher who exceeds the maximum tenure of their candidature without an approved extension will be deemed to be, and recorded as having, 'lapsed candidature'. Any lapsed Graduate Researcher can apply to the Graduate School for readmission to candidature for the purpose of submitting their thesis within the following time periods:

- Graduate Researchers who were enrolled full-time at the time of their candidature's lapse, up to six (6) months from notification of lapse of candidature
- Graduate Researchers who were enrolled part-time at the time of their candidature's lapse, up to 12 months from notification of lapse of candidature

In the event, your candidature is lapsed and not resumed (including for the reason that the University declines your application), your academic transcript will record your status as 'Withdrawn'. This would mean your candidature was terminated by the University.

For information about applying for readmission to submit, please see [Section 11](#).

9. Late Candidature

Prior to Submission: Thesis Requirements

Graduate Researchers are required to give two (2) months' notice of the expected date on which the thesis will be submitted to hdrexamination@scu.edu.au.

Preparing the Thesis for Submission

All Graduate Researchers are required to provide a final draft of their thesis to their Principal Supervisor for advice and comment before the thesis itself is finalised. The Graduate School strongly recommends that Graduate Researchers have their thesis professionally proofread and edited for expression prior to submission for examination.

A PhD thesis should not be more than 400 pages or 100,000 words, while a Professional Doctorate or Masters by Research thesis should not be more than 200 pages or 50,000 words. This includes maps and diagrams but excludes the reference list and appendices. However, as conventions vary between disciplines, Graduate Researchers are advised to consult their Supervisor or Faculty Director HDR Training (DHDRT) on the appropriate length of their thesis.

On completion of their studies, a Graduate Researcher must submit a thesis that complies with the requirements as set out below.

Thesis Presentation

- The thesis should be word processed and may be printed double-sided, in not less than 1.5 line spacing on International Standards Organisations paper size A4 paper (297mm x 210mm) or a standard size as close to this as possible.
- Faded, dirty, or faint copies will not be accepted.
- Recommended font size is 12 point for Times New Roman and not less than 11 points (10 points for footnotes) and printed using a high-quality laser printer or equivalent.
- The inside margin must be 3cm wide. The top, bottom, and outside margins must be at least 2cm wide to allow for trimming by the printer.
- Where part of the thesis contains work which the Graduate Researcher has had accepted for publication, or published, details of all publications must be clearly stated.

Components of the Thesis

All copies will include the following components, in this order:

Title Page showing:

- the title in full;
- the Graduate Researcher's full name and degrees;
- the Faculty in which the Graduate Researcher is enrolled for the degree;
- the name of the degree for which the thesis is submitted; and
- the date of submission of the thesis

Thesis Declaration, where the usual wording takes the following form, followed by the Graduate Researcher's name, signature, and date:

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied

with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Abstract of no more than 400 words. The abstract would normally include a summary of the research context, research questions, methodology, and results. You would also submit this abstract three months before submission to the Principal/Coordinating Supervisor who forwards it to potential examiners.

Acknowledgements, in which the Graduate Researcher would acknowledge those who have provided guidance and support during their candidature.

Table of Contents

List of Figures & Tables

List of Abbreviations used in the thesis

The main text, consisting of chapters covering the introduction, a review of literature, methodology, results, and conclusions in a form appropriate to the Graduate Researcher 's discipline.

Reference List, covering sources cited in the text of the thesis only. All citations and references need to be consistent in a format acceptable to the Graduate Researcher 's discipline.

Appendices

Examples of conventional structure of Masters by Thesis and PhD Theses.

The following examples of thesis structures reflect the number of data intensive chapters both supervisors and examiners expect when reviewing a Master by Thesis or Doctoral Thesis for examination in STEM/HASS disciplines, and will provide a template or example of the structure of creative works based thesis:

NB: *Students should be guided by their supervisor's expert advice which may differ from the below.*

Example of a Conventional Masters by Thesis Structure (STEM/HASS):

- Introduction
- Literature review – back ground etc.
- General Methods
- **Data intensive chapter - Study 1** – introduction, methods, results, discussion
- **Data intensive chapter - Study 2** – introduction, methods, results, discussion
- General discussion
- Conclusion

Example of a Conventional PhD Structure (STEM/HASS):

- Introduction
- Literature review – background etc.
- General Methods
- **Data intensive chapter - Study 1** – introduction, methods, results, discussion
- **Data intensive chapter - Study 2** – introduction, methods, results, discussion
- **Data intensive chapter - Study 3** – introduction, methods, results, discussion
- General discussion
- Conclusion

Creative Practice Research Theses

Creative practice research is understood as constituting an enquiry that is undertaken jointly across both artistic and traditional scholarly forms – that is, students undertaking a creative practice research degree pursue a research question across multiple forms, and the thesis will normally consist of both a creative component and a written exegesis that have a symbiotic relationship.

The weighting between creative component and exegesis should be negotiated between the Graduate Researcher and supervisors early in the project and made evident in the introduction to the thesis.

Weighting will vary according to the nature of the project, but as the two components are considered equally important in constituting the thesis as a whole, should be understood as 50/50% up to 60/40%. Thus, while these weightings vary according to the nature of the project, the written component of a creative practice research PhD would normally be 30,000-40,000 words, and 15,000-20,000 for a Masters.

The structure of a creative practice research exegesis will also often differ according to the discipline and form of the creative works, and the approach. Creative projects may focus on practical concerns to do with process, materiality and discipline, or thematic concerns to do with the conceptual underpinning of the works, or a combination of both.

Example structure of a Creative Practice Research MA or PhD exegesis

- Introduction/Background
- Literature Review / Repertoire Review (Music) / Artefact Review (visual arts, media art, creative writing)
- Methodology
- Analysis / discussion of creative works or process in terms of conceptual or practical concerns
- Results/Reflection on Research and Creative Work
- Conclusion

Scope and scale of the creative component: Masters

Questions of scope and scale will vary across the different forms, media and disciplines in a creative project, but the following can be taken as general guide:

- Creative writing: a novella of 15,000 – 30,000 words; a collection of short stories or poems
- Music: a selection of compositions totaling 20-30 minutes; 20-30 minutes of an original film score; score and libretto for an operetta of 20-30 minutes duration
- Visual or media art; a solo exhibition of 5-10 significant pieces or a lesser number of complex interactive or multi-media works; a film of 15-20 minutes duration.

Scope and scale of the creative component: PhD

- Creative writing: a novel of 30,000-60,000 words or more; a substantial collection of short stories or poems
- Music: a selection of compositions totaling 40-60 minutes; 40-60 minutes of an original film score; score and libretto for an operetta of 40-60 minutes duration
- Visual or media art; a solo exhibition of 10-20 significant pieces or a lesser number of highly complex interactive or multi-media works; a film of 30-40 minutes duration or longer.

10. Submission & Approval of Examiners

Approval of Examiners

Examiners are approved by the Dean, Graduate School on the recommendation of the Principal/Coordinating Supervisor and DHDRT.

Graduate Researchers should discuss potential examiners with their supervisors four (4) to six (6) months prior to submitting their thesis. It is likely the Graduate Researcher is in the best position to make recommendations about examiners; however, the final list of approved examiners is not made known to the Graduate Researcher.

Once an agreement between the Graduate Researcher and Principal/Coordinating Supervisor has been reached on the final list of proposed examiners, the Supervisor will contact the potential examiners informally. At this time the potential examiners will receive a thesis title, abstract, and proposed submission date.

After the potential examiners have agreed to examine the thesis, the Principal/Coordinating Supervisor recommends the examiners (2+1 for PhD, Masters by Research and Professional Doctorate) to the DHDRT. When the DHDRT agrees with the list of potential examiners, the proposed examiners are submitted to the Graduate School via [IRMA NextGen](#) for final approval.

When the Graduate School approves the proposed examiners, the examiners are then in a position to receive the thesis for examination when submitted.

Submission of Thesis for Examination

Graduate Researchers must in accordance with [Rules relating to Doctor of Philosophy](#), [Rules relating to Professional Doctorate Awards](#) and [Rules relating to Masters by Thesis Awards](#) submit their thesis for text-matching analysis in accordance with the [Academic Integrity Framework](#) and the [Text Matching Software Higher Degree by Research Procedures](#).

All students are required to submit an electronic copy of their thesis to the Graduate School for examination. Depending on examiner preference Graduate Researchers may be required to submit hard copies of their thesis to the Graduate School for examination, however it is preferable that electronic copies only are issued to examiners. (The number of hard copies required for examination will be advised to the student once examiners have been approved by the Dean, Graduate School. If hardbound copies are required for examination, the thesis copies must be submitted in temporary binding, preferably spiral-bound format. The temporary binding should be strong enough to prevent damage to the thesis during the ordinary course of handling or postage).

NOTE: Theses unbound, stapled, or presented in ring-binder folders will not be accepted.

When submitting the thesis, it must be accompanied by a thesis submission coversheet available through [IRMA NextGen](#) which has a statement where the Principal Supervisor indicates that the thesis satisfies the University's formal presentation and format requirements and that there is prima facie evidence that the work, including the thesis, is in a form suitable for examination.

Ethics approval: If the Graduate Researcher was required to obtain Ethics approval for their research during their candidature, they will be required to submit, a copy of the Ethics Application and the Ethics approval notification as an appendix within their thesis prior to going out for examination. Once your thesis has been examined, if you wish to remove your full Ethics application from your thesis before it is submitted to the University repository, please advise hdrexamination@scu.edu.au once you have been recommended for award of degree. This information will be included in the final submission documentation too.

11. Examination

Appointment of Examiners

- 1) The recommendation of Examiners is confidential and must not be communicated to the Graduate Researcher at any time.
- 2) In order to avoid delays in the examination process, at least three months before the submission of the thesis, the Principal Supervisor will:
 - a. consult with the Graduate Researcher on any objections the Graduate Researcher may have to potential examiners. Any such objections will be taken into account in the process of selection of examiners;
 - b. consult with the co-supervisors and Director of Higher Degree Research and Training (DHDRT) regarding potentially suitable examiners and any possible conflicts of interest. MAJOR conflicts of interest would normally preclude the involvement of the proposed examiner. In the case of MINOR conflicts of interest, it is up to the Principal Supervisor to make a case as to why the proposed examiner is still appropriate – this information will be passed by the DHDRT to the Dean, Graduate School for a decision;
 - c. provide a list of suggested examiners via email to the DHDRT with associated URL's/CV/publications, along with the thesis title and summary.
- 3) The DHDRT will then:
 - a. Independently check for potential conflicts of interest (e.g. current and previous institutional affiliations, co-authored papers etc);
 - b. scrutinise the suitability of the proposed examiners based on qualifications, expertise and relevance to the project;
 - c. if necessary, raise any concerns with the supervisor and discuss potential alternatives.
- 4) Once there is an in-principle agreement about the suitability of examiners between the supervisors and DHDRT, the Principal Supervisor can approach the potential examiners to establish their willingness and availability to examine the thesis. When contacting the potential examiners, Principal Supervisors should preferably use the template letter provided by the Graduate School. The following information must be provided:
 - a. the name of the Graduate Researcher and an indication of the predicted date of thesis submission;
 - b. the thesis title and summary/abstract;
 - c. an indication of the expected timeframe for examination (8 weeks);
 - d. reference to the conflict of interest guidelines;
 - e. if applicable, an indication of whether they are being recommended as a reserve examiner and the importance of this role.
- 5) The Principal Supervisor also should obtain the following information from potential examiners for administrative purposes:
 - a. the best email address to contact them on for the examination process;
 - b. telephone contact number;
 - c. the number of Higher Degree Research students at the Masters, PhD, and Professional Doctorate levels which they have supervised;

- d. the number of Higher Degree Research theses at the Masters, PhD, and Professional Doctorate levels which they have examined;
 - e. if relevant the details of any perceived conflict of interest between themselves and the Graduate Researcher;
- 6) The Principal Supervisor will also advise the potential examiners of the honorarium payable for examining a thesis from Southern Cross University. Honorariums differ and the honorarium payable to external examiners is AUD\$604 (2025) for PhD and Professional Doctoral theses and AUD\$340.00 (2025) for Masters by Thesis.
- 7) Once the required number of examiners have been secured, the Principal Supervisor should fill out the Recommendation of Examiners coversheet in [IRMA NextGen](#).
- 8) After considering the examiners that have been formally nominated by the Principal Supervisor, the DHDRT will make the recommendation to the Dean, Graduate School. In order to approve the recommended examiners, the Dean must be provided with the Recommendation of Examiners form and supporting information from the Principal Supervisor including:
 - a. thesis summary/abstract;
 - b. CV or URL link to CV for all the proposed examiners;
 - c. Details of at least 3-5 research publications from each examiner and an explanation of their relevant expertise in relation to the thesis;
 - d. An explanation of any perceived conflicts of interest.
- 9) After the examiners have been approved by the Dean, Graduate School, their details will be recorded and stored until the thesis has been submitted and approved for examination by the supervisory team and DHDRT.
- 10) Examiners will be made familiar with the requirements of the University, AQF standards for the degree and the essential parts of the Course Rules governing the particular degree.
- 11) After the thesis has been submitted, all subsequent liaison with the examiners will be made by the Graduate School. Principal Supervisors are not to contact the examiners under any circumstances and if the examiners contact the supervisors, their inquiries should be immediately referred to the DHDRT and Graduate School.
- 12) In order to preserve the integrity and independence of the examination process, the identity of examiners will not be revealed to Graduate Researchers until the examination process has been completed and not then if an examiner has requested to remain anonymous.

Provision of Thesis to Examiners

After the student submits the thesis for examination, and the format of the thesis has been approved by the Principal Supervisor and DHDRT, the Graduate School submits the thesis to the two primary examiners for a PhD and Masters by Thesis.

The examiners are requested to return their examination reports and associated documentation within six to eight weeks of receipt of the thesis.

Standards of Examination

A **Masters by Thesis** work must show evidence of competence in research and scholarship including:

- (i) reviewing literature in a critical and focused manner;
- (ii) deploying analytic, comparative and critically reflective skills as appropriate;
- (iii) gathering and analysing material and interpreting results in an informed and competent manner;
- (iv) utilising and justifying appropriate methodologies, techniques and processes.

The Thesis must be clearly, accurately and cogently written and suitably documented. The work must demonstrate originality and a thorough understanding of the field of study.

A **PhD Thesis** must embody all of the above features of a Masters by Thesis along with the following additional requirements:

- (v) make an original and significant contribution to knowledge and understanding in the field;
- (vi) demonstrate a high-level capacity for independent research

Examiners' Reports

Each Examiner, must submit an independent report which is made up of the Summary Report form provided to each examiner, as well as an in-depth written report. Comments and suggestions must be detailed enough to enable the Dean, Graduate School to gauge the quality of the thesis. Comment on the originality and critical insight of the work are particularly appreciated.

Examiners are invited to indicate whether, and to what extent, they wish to remain anonymous with respect to the supervisor and to the Graduate Researcher. If preservation of anonymity is not clearly requested by the examiner, anonymity will not normally be preserved.

It is requested that the report conclude with a recommendation of one of the following categories:

(Please note: the A to E designations are categories and are not aligned with the University's grading system)

A. Award with no/after minor amendments

The thesis meets the required AQF standards in terms of nature and quality of work, and should be accepted as satisfactory for the award of degree once the minor/typographical errors referenced in my report are revised or defended to the satisfaction of the Dean, Graduate School. These corrections would normally be completed within a period of three months.

B. Award after amendments

The thesis meets the required AQF standards in terms of nature and quality of work. However, there are passages that need to be revised or defended to the satisfaction of the Dean, Graduate School prior to the thesis being accepted as

satisfactory for the award of degree. These amendments would normally be completed within a period of three months.

C. Allow revision and re-examination

The thesis does not yet meet all required AQF standards for the award of the degree and the Graduate Researcher should complete a further period of research and/or writing to build upon the current work and submit for re-examination. These corrections will be considered by the Principal/Primary Academic/Coordinating Supervisor and Director of Higher Degrees Research Training prior to submission for re-examination, and would normally be completed within six months for a full-time student or 12 months for a part time student.

D. Allow revision and re-submission as a Masters by Thesis (Note this option is only available for PhD and Professional Doctorate)

The thesis does not meet the AQF standard for award of Doctor of Philosophy. The Graduate Researcher should not be awarded the degree of PhD, but should be allowed to revise the thesis and re-submit the thesis for examination as a Masters by Thesis.

E. Do not award

The thesis does not meet the required AQF standards for the award of the degree and does not warrant a further period of research and/or writing. The Graduate Researcher should not be awarded the degree, nor should they be permitted to revise and submit for re-examination.

Outstanding Thesis Award – Chancellor’s Medal

The Chancellor's Medal for Outstanding PhD Thesis is awarded to a Graduate Researcher whose thesis makes a significant contribution to the field of research. There may be more than one Chancellor's Medal awarded each year or none awarded in any particular year. Normally, no more than five per cent of theses reach this level of attainment.

In order to be eligible for consideration, the thesis will need to have received an A Grading from both examiners at the first round of examination.

Where examiners comment that the thesis makes an outstanding contribution to scholarship in its discipline, the examiners are requested to provide the following information:

- a. the number of PhD theses they have examined to date and
- b. the reasons for their assessment in terms of the international significance of the work and its level of excellence.

Where the criteria set out is met, the following will be considered by the Dean of Graduate School:

- a) the examiners' comments and information provided;
- b) the quality and nature of publications resulting from the thesis;

- c) recommendations from the relevant Associate Dean of Research and Director, Higher Degree Research; and
- d) If the Associate Dean of Research or Director of Higher Degree Research does not support the nomination, written reasons for that decision must be provided to the Dean of Graduate School.

The Dean of Graduate School reviews the nomination and determines whether to recommend the nomination to the Academic Board Executive Committee for approval.

Further details can be found in the [Prizes and Medals Policy](#).

Dealing with Examiners' Reports

First round of examination

Where both examiners agree:

1. If both examiners award either A or B grades, the Graduate Researcher can proceed with a Table of Changes and Responses documenting the changes that have been implemented and those which will be challenged, including a detailed justification for the latter. In addition, a thesis file with the changes implemented in track-changes mode will be provided. The Table of Changes and Responses will need to be cross-referenced to the Amended Thesis.

The HDRT Director and Principal Supervisor are responsible for approving the Table of Changes and Responses and updated thesis before they are sent to the Dean Graduate School for approval. Once approved by the Dean, a final version of the thesis is submitted along with a recommendation by the HDRT Director that Academic Board award the degree to the Graduate Researcher.

2. If both examiners award C grades then the thesis enters the second round of examination. Here the Graduate Researcher will be permitted to revise the thesis extensively considering the examiners' comments and recommendations. As part of this, the Graduate Researcher will provide a Table of Changes and Responses indicating what they have addressed and defending any comments they do not agree with.

The revised thesis will then be sent out to two examiners - these examiners may or may not have been involved in the original examination process. The supervisory team and HDRT Director will nominate two examiners and provide justifications for the choice, if they are different to the original panel, for approval by the Dean. In the case of an original examiner being involved in the second examination process, a Table of Changes and Responses dealing with their examiner's comments will also be sent out to them.

3. If both examiners award D grades, if the thesis is a PhD thesis, then the Graduate Researcher will not progress to the second round of examination as a PhD thesis but will be permitted to revise the thesis and re-submit the thesis for examination as a Masters by thesis.
4. If both examiners award E grades, the thesis will be deemed as having failed and will not progress to the second round of examination.

First round of examination where there are conflicting examiner reports.

5. If there are conflicting examiner reports then the thesis is sent out to the reserve/third examiner as part of the first round of examination and the course of action taken will be guided by the majority recommendation as detailed below (ie. If the reports are conflicting and they are anything other than A or B reports, the third/reserve examiner will be engaged). Examples of conflicting examiner reports in first round of examination that result in the thesis being sent to the third/reserve examiner are:

(AB)	C
(AB)	D
(AB)	E
C	D
D	E

Dealing with the third examiner report:

When conflicting examiner reports result in the third examiner being brought in as part of the first round of examination, the course of action will be guided by the majority recommendation as detailed below:

6. If the third examiner results in two A or B grades then the process under point 1 is followed.
7. If the third examiner results in two C grades then the process under point 2 is followed.
8. If the third examiner results in two D grades then the process under point 3 is followed.
9. If the third examiner results in two E grades then the process under point 4 is followed.

It should be noted that the third examiner is still part of the first examination round.

If there is conflict between all 3 examiner reports in the first round of examination the following process applies:

If the grades awarded as part of first round of examination are as follows	Course of action to be followed
(AB)/C/D	Re-examination of PhD (follow point 2)
(AB)/C/E	Re-examination of PhD (follow point 2)/Masters re-examination
(AB)/ D/E	Re-examination of PhD as a Masters (follow point 3)/ Masters fail
C/D/E	Re-examination of PhD as a Masters (follow point 3)/ Masters fail

Second Round of Examination:

The revised thesis will then be sent out to two examiners - these examiners may or may not have been involved in the original examination process. The supervisory team and HDRT Director will nominate two examiners and provide justifications for the choice, if they are different to the original panel, for approval by the Dean. In the case of an original examiner being involved in the second examination process, a Table of Changes and Responses dealing with their examiner's comments will also be sent out to them.

If the two re-examiners award either A or B grades, the Graduate Researcher can proceed with the process outlined under point 1 above.

If the two re-examiners award C, D or E grades, the thesis will be deemed to have not passed the second round of examination. Consequently, in accordance with SCU Rules relating to awards – Rule 7 – Masters by thesis (48), Rules relating to awards – Rule 8 - Professional Doctorate (48) and Rules relating to awards - Rule 9 - Doctor of Philosophy (49), the degree will not be awarded. In the case of PhD and Professional Doctorate, an award of two C's, two E's or a C and E, will provide the option for re-examination as a Master by Thesis.

If the two re-examiners provide conflicting reports of (AB) and C/D/E then the next step is Adjudication. Here an Adjudicator is chosen by the Principal Supervisor and HDRT Director in consultation with the Dean. This Adjudicator would not have been involved in the previous examination process. The revised thesis, and re-examiner's comments and Table of Changes and Responses will be provided to the Adjudicator. The Adjudicator will not be made aware that the thesis has undergone two rounds of examination. If the Adjudicator concludes that that the Graduate Researcher's responses and revision warrant an A or B grade, the process under point 1 is followed. If the Adjudicator concludes that this has not been achieved, the thesis will be deemed to have not passed the second round of examination. Consequently, in accordance with SCU Rules relating to awards – Rule 7 – Masters by thesis (48), Rules relating to awards – Rule 8 - Professional Doctorate (48) and Rules relating to awards - Rule 9 - Doctor of Philosophy (49), the degree will not be awarded. In the case of PhD and Professional Doctorate, an award of two C's, two D's or a C and D, will provide the option for re-examination as a Master by Thesis.

The Dean, Graduate School is Responsible for:

- (i) Approving the Graduate Researcher Table of Changes and the corrected the thesis
- (ii) Providing the Graduate Researcher with the opportunity to revise and resubmit the thesis for a second round of examination, if required;
- (iii) Appointing an adjudicator if required;
- (iv) Recommending to Academic Board the award of the degree;

After a decision on the award of a degree has been made, the Dean, Graduate School will normally communicate to the Graduate Researcher, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Graduate Researcher may Request Examination

The Dean, Graduate School will consider a request from a Graduate Researcher that the thesis be submitted to the examiners, even if this is against the advice of the supervisor.

Notification to Examiners of Outcome

All examiners are notified of the outcome of the examination process once the examination process is completed

12. Post-Examination & Award of Degree

Once a Graduate Researcher has completed all changes to the thesis and Dean, Graduate School has recommended the award of degree, it is a prerequisite of course completion that Graduate Researchers provide the following material to the HDR Officer.

PhD & Masters by Thesis

1. One electronic copy of the final thesis in PDF format and
2. A 100-word Abstract of the thesis (this is a Federal Government requirement for the production of the Australian Higher Education Graduate Statement ('AHEGS'))
3. A 400-word Abstract of your thesis (this is the abstract from your final thesis)
4. A fully signed Thesis Deposit and Verification Form. This requirement is pursuant to the University's policy that, subject to authorised exemption, all theses are to be included in the University Library's repositories. This coversheet is available in [IRMA NextGen](#).
5. If applicable, if your Ethics application included any confidential information you can elect to have this redacted/removed from the final library copy.
6. All of the abovementioned copies of the final thesis (both hard and electronic), the 100 and 400-word Abstracts, and the deposit form are lodged with the Graduate School. To avoid doubt, Graduate Researchers will not be considered to have completed the course and therefore will not be eligible to graduate unless and until this material is provided. This material should be lodged as soon as possible to ensure meeting graduation deadlines.
7. Once the Graduate School has received all of the above material, this information will be provided to:
 - a. Student Services for the purpose of finalising academic transcripts; and
 - b. the Graduation Office for the purpose of preparing for the Graduate Researcher's graduation.
8. The Graduation Office will schedule the conferral of the award, and will then contact the Graduate Researcher to advise of the date of graduation and ceremony options. The Graduation Office will use the information held in the University's student database for all contact. Therefore, it is critical that Graduate Researchers ensure all contact and other enrolment details are maintained as current and correct. This information may be verified with Student Services at enrol@scu.edu.au.
9. It is also the Graduate Researcher's responsibility to respond to the Graduation Office about their intentions to attend or not to attend a ceremony, including confirming the Principal/Coordinating Supervisor's name and whether or not they will attend with you. For information about Southern Cross University graduation, please visit <http://www.scu.edu.au/graduation>.

13. Lapsed Candidature

Resumption from Being a Lapsed Graduate Researcher

A lapsed, former student may apply to the Graduate School for readmission to HDR candidature in order to submit their thesis for examination within six months of the commencement of their lapse in the case of full-time students and within twelve months of the commencement of their lapse in the case of part-time students. An application coversheet is located in [IRMA NextGen](#).

An application for readmission will be considered on the basis of all of the following criteria:

- a. whether the thesis accompanying the application is suitable to be sent out for examination;
- b. whether a suitable academic staff member is available to propose examiners for the thesis;
- c. whether a suitable academic staff member is available to supervise the applicant during the phase following receipt of the examiners' reports; and
- d. whether the DHDRT approves the former Graduate Researcher be readmitted for purposes of submitting a thesis for examination.

Upon receipt of a properly submitted application for readmission and copies of the thesis, the Graduate School will consult with the Faculty in which the applicant was formerly enrolled with respect to each of the readmission criteria detailed above.

Subject to the outcome of that consultation, the Graduate School will notify the applicant of the decision. An application shall be declined on the basis that one or more of the criteria detailed above has not been satisfied.

If the thesis is suitable for examination and a suitable supervisor is available, proposed examiners must be submitted to Dean, Graduate School per the guidelines in [Section 8](#). When Dean, Graduate School has approved examiners, the applicant will be re-enrolled and the thesis will be sent for examination. At this point, normal examination processes shall apply.

An applicant must, at the time he or she submits an Application for Readmission for Purposes of Submitting a Thesis, provide a final electronic PDF copy of his or her thesis. In the event the application for readmission is successful, further spiral bound copies may be required for the examination process.

14. Expired Lapsed Candidature

Re-admission from expired lapsed candidature

Any lapsed Graduate Researcher, who does not apply for re-admission to submit a thesis for examination by the end of their maximum period of lapsed candidature, needs to complete an application to re-enroll for the purpose of submitting their thesis. An application coversheet is located in [IRMA NextGen](#) and is to be used in the event of candidature which was lapsed by the University because the former Graduate Researcher's Thesis was not submitted by the due date and, the period of lapsed candidature has expired, and the former Graduate Researcher is now ready to submit their Thesis

Please note that from the date of approval of your re-enrolment from lapsed candidature, you will be charged a fee of \$500 for every two (2) months or part thereof until such time you submit your thesis for examination.

15. Feedback and Complaints

HDR students can lodge complaints with the Graduate School a number of ways regarding concerns around their candidature.

To raise a complaint or issues with the Graduate School you can do so in a number of ways:

- By email
- Progress reports
- Confidential reports
- Raising the issue with their HDR supervisors who then contact the Graduate School

If you would like to make a formal complaint you can do so via the [SCU Feedback and Complaints Page](#). All matters relating to allegations of harassment, bullying or discrimination by an employee of the University should be reported directly via the [Complaint Policy - Staff](#).