

An Assessment Poll for HDR Supervisors to gauge their HDR Candidate's Progress

(Based on material developed for JCU by Dr Carey Denholm AM, a clinical psychologist and former Graduate Dean at the University of Tasmania)

The purpose of this poll is to provide the supervisors of Higher Degree by Research candidates with indicators of progress (or lack of progress) in HDR candidature. These indicators are designed to assist supervisors to recognise candidates at risk so that they can help them through increased awareness of their performance.

The indicators are in no particular order. All you need to do is circle the letter next to the statement you think best fits the candidate at this point in time and sum up the overall score.

1. Monthly goals and deadlines

- a. The candidate is meeting the majority of their monthly outcomes and their work is of graduate level quality.
- b. The candidate is meeting only some of their monthly outcomes and is struggling to produce work of graduate level quality.
- c. The candidate is meeting almost none of their monthly outcomes and the Advisory Panel questions the quality of their work.

2. Research Plan

- a. The candidate is able to work independently within a strong conceptual structure and research plan and their research questions are being refined as appropriate.
- b. The candidate frequently checks with their Advisory Panel about the research direction and occasionally modifies the key questions after reading published research.
- c. The candidate shows reluctance to come to meetings with their Advisory Panel and their issues seem to be circular and repetitive.

3. Research Direction

- a. The candidate has clear expectations and positive relationships with their Advisory Panel, meets with them regularly as agreed and distributes quality notes after each advisory meeting.
- b. The candidate is struggling to build a working relationship with their Advisory Panel.
- c. The candidate-Advisory Panel relationship is deteriorating, meetings are tense and unproductive and the candidate is achieving little compared with other candidates.

4. Writing

- a. The candidate willingly incorporates their advisors' verbal and written comments into their written work and learns from their mistakes.
- b. The candidate struggles to incorporate verbal and written comments and extensive re-correction is always required of their written work.
- c. The candidate appears uncertain about the research direction and is struggling to communicate their own ideas and shows little progress in writing about their research.

5. Student Growth

- a. The candidate occasionally talks about the research process and its impact upon their thinking, skills and professional competencies.
- b. The candidate has some difficulties in understanding the research process and the ways in which their thinking and skill level is growing and changing.
- c. The candidate demonstrates anxiety and hesitance at candidature milestones and appears unable to see ways in which their thinking and written skills are developing

6. Raising Issues

- a. The candidate is confident and professionally appropriate in raising academic, personal and/or career related research issues with their Advisory Panel.
- b. The candidate rarely raises academic, personal and/or career related research issues with their Advisory Panel.
- c. The candidate never raises academic, personal and/or career related research issues with their Advisory Panel.

7. Contact with Peers

- a. The candidate maintains regular and positive contact with other members of their research group.
- b. The candidate tends to keep to themselves and is a passive member of the research group.
- c. The candidate is becoming an isolate, avoids coming to campus and may admit they feel stressed every time they enter their building at JCU.

8. Work-Life Balance

- a. The candidate shows evidence of work-life balance.
- b. The candidate indicates there are personal issues that are causing them some anxiety, intruding upon their daily thinking and consuming some of their emotional energy.
- c. The candidate is showing signs that personal, family and/or cultural issues are causing considerable anxiety and preventing them from devoting appropriate time to their research.

9. Personality

- a. The candidate is passionate about their research and brings enthusiasm to the research group.
- b. The candidate appears to be struggling to maintain motivation for the research and indicates they are concerned that they do not have the technical background to complete the research.
- c. The candidate is spending so much time on other activities that they are not devoting enough time to their research.

10. Progressing towards their goals

- a. The candidate regularly informs their advisors of their progress.
- b. The candidate is starting to avoid their advisors and is behind in the submission of progress reports.
- c. The candidate never initiates contact with their advisors and has to be chased to submit every progress report.

11. Distractions

- a. The candidate is able to manage distractions and frustrations and shows emotional balance.
- b. The candidate is finding it difficult to manage distractions (i.e., internet, reading articles, external activities) and frustrations emerge to affect their emotional balance.
- c. The candidate is totally preoccupied with daily distractions (i.e., internet, reading articles, gambling, fitness, gardening, external activities).

12. Health

- a. The candidate appears to be coping well with the pressures of study.
- b. The candidate has an increasing number of sick days and a change is starting to appear in their physical and mental well-being.
- c. The candidate repeatedly requests suspensions and is not managing their physical and mental well-being.

Warning signs include: inappropriate dress, poor diet, breaking appointments at the last minute, lack of punctuality, appearing emotionally flat, long periods of silence, disengagement, withdrawal and lack of eye contact, unusually soft voice).

13. Working towards completion

- a. The candidate is actively involved in the dissemination of their research (i.e., publications conference presentations, seminars).
- b. The candidate needs a high level of encouragement and support to prepare publications and/or deliver research seminars relative to their peers.
- c. The candidate is not attempting to prepare publications and/or deliver research seminars.

How did the candidate do?

Count up the number of circled 'A's, 'B's and 'C's and complete the following scoresheet:

	#	Weighting	Weighted number
#A's			
#B's			
#C's			
Total Score			

What does the Total Score indicate?

Total Score 28-39: The candidate is showing the indicators required for a timely and successful completion.

Total Score 20-27: The candidate is showing indicators that suggest they may be struggling at the moment. Every HDR candidate will experience some of these indicators for brief periods at some time during candidature. It is important is that these indicators do not keep occurring at a moderately high level for more than a few weeks. If the candidate is evidencing these key indicators for a prolonged period you should talk with them and suggest that they seek external assistance as soon as possible. Suggest they talk with the School Director HDRT in their School and Supervisors

Inform the Dean, Graduate Studies/ Graduate School. Students can also be put in contact with the University's Counselling and Psychological Support Services.

Total Score 13-19: The candidate is showing indicators that suggest they are in danger of non-completion. You must talk with them and suggest they seek additional help from the University's Counselling and Psychological Support Services as soon as possible. Experience shows that candidates scoring in this range are not likely to have a successful progress report/in-candidature review and will be required to withdraw from candidature or be placed on a leave of absence. Inform the Dean, Graduate Studies/Graduate School immediately.