

Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 8 - Professional Doctorate Awards

Section 1 - Professional Doctorate

Part A - Admission to Candidature

- (1) An application for admission to candidature is accepted subject to the availability of facilities and supervision.
- (2) An application may be submitted at any time on the prescribed form and lodged with the Graduate School for consideration by the Dean, Graduate School.
- (3) An applicant will seek admission to a Professional Doctorate course as:
 - a. a full-time Candidate; or
 - b. a part-time Candidate.
- (4) To qualify for admission to a Professional Doctorate, applicants must:
 - a. meet one of the following criteria:
 - i. possess a Bachelor's degree and demonstrate relevant professional experience as considered acceptable by the Dean, Graduate School; or
 - ii. possess a Bachelor's degree with first or second class Honours from Southern Cross University, or equivalent; or
 - iii. possess a Master's degree from Southern Cross University, or equivalent; and
 - b. satisfy such additional requirements for admission to Professional Doctorate candidature, if any, as may be prescribed by the Higher Degrees Research Committee.
- (5) All Applicants 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.
- (6) IELTS equivalent test scores are set out in the [IELTS Equivalence Schedule](#). IELTS equivalencies relating to higher degree by research awards are determined by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality) following consultation with the Dean, Graduate School.
- (7) Where an English language test score is used to demonstrate English language proficiency, that score must have been attained within 12 months of the applicant's commencement of study.
- (8) In exceptional circumstances, the Dean, Graduate School may determine that an applicant meets the University's minimum English language proficiency requirements even though the applicant is not able to satisfy the requirements set out in clause (5). Such a decision must be reported to Academic Board.

Part B - Enrolment

(9) The Dean, Graduate School will approve or, if necessary, vary any periods of candidature during which the Candidate will be required to pursue study and research at the University, as recommended by the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training.

(10) A commencing Candidate is enrolled on completion of all of the following:

- a. acceptance of the offer of admission by the Dean, Graduate School;
- b. completion and submission of relevant forms; and
- c. payment of any prescribed fees (unless the Director, Student Administration Services has granted an extension of time for such payment).

(11) A Candidate may convert from full-time to part-time candidature, and vice-versa, with the approval of the Manager, Graduate School, upon the recommendation of the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training.

Part C - Concurrent Studies

(12) If a Candidate wishes to enrol in another degree at the University, approval must first be obtained from the Dean, Graduate School, upon the recommendation of the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training.

Part D - Requirements for the Award

(13) To be eligible for the award of a Professional Doctorate, a Candidate will:

- a. complete the prescribed coursework units;
- b. complete the Professional Doctorate Thesis Unit involving an original investigation, review, criticism or design; and
- c. maintain satisfactory academic progress as determined by the Dean, Graduate School in consultation with the Principal Supervisor and relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training; and
- d. be confirmed through the Confirmation of Candidature process; and
- e. submit for examination, and have accepted, a thesis prepared under the supervision of the Principal Supervisor; and
- f. complete such other work as may be prescribed by the Dean, Graduate School.

Coursework Units

(14) Coursework units undertaken as part of a Professional Doctorate will be subject to the [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 2 - Coursework Awards - General Provisions](#) and [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations](#).

Thesis Unit

(15) A Candidate will be permitted to proceed to the Professional Doctorate Thesis Unit once they have:

- a. successfully completed any prescribed course work units; and
- b. completed a Supervisor-Candidate Agreement, within one month of commencement of enrolment, containing criteria for satisfactory academic progress, with the proposed supervisory team, and approved by the Graduate School.

(16) A Candidate will normally be eligible for the award of a Professional Doctorate when:

- a. in the case of a full-time Candidate, at least 12 months have elapsed from the time of enrolment in the Professional Doctorate Thesis Unit; or
- b. in the case of a part-time Candidate, at least 24 months have elapsed from the time of enrolment in the Professional Doctorate Thesis Unit.

(17) Academic Board may approve a Candidate who is specially qualified in the relevant discipline to complete the degree in less than the time set out in clause (16).

Part E - Work Environment and Supervision

(18) The [Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervisor Policy](#) specifies the responsibilities and obligations of all parties involved in Higher Degree Research supervision, including:

- a. supervisors;
- b. Candidates;
- c. Graduate School;
- d. Dean, Graduate School; and
- e. Faculties and Colleges.

(19) The Dean, Graduate School will normally appoint two supervisors — one who will act as Principal Supervisor and one who will act as Co-supervisor. The Principal Supervisor will be a member of the academic staff of the University. The Co-supervisor will be a member of the academic staff of the University or an adjunct appointment of the University.

(20) All Candidates will be required to participate in such colloquia, research seminars and other work of the University as may be considered appropriate by their Principal Supervisor.

(21) Candidates will, as their Principal Supervisor may from time to time require, submit drafts of the major sections of the written thesis for review and will submit to their Principal Supervisor a final draft of the written thesis for advice and comment before submission for examination.

(22) The Dean, Graduate School may approve a additional Co-supervisors and/or Associate supervisors from outside the University to be added to the supervisory team.

(23) If a person appointed as supervisor is unable to perform the duties of the appointment, the Dean, Graduate School will take reasonable steps to identify and appoint a replacement supervisor from within the University, on the recommendation of the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research. This may include, but is not limited to:

- a. where a supervisor's employment arrangements change after commencing as a supervisor and where these employment arrangements preclude the individual from continuing as a supervisor; or
- b. where the Candidate/supervisor relationship is no longer tenable and all reasonable steps have been taken by the Candidate, supervisor, and Faculty or College to remedy the situation.

(24) If the Dean, Graduate School has taken reasonable steps under clause (23) and exhausted all reasonable avenues to identify a replacement Principal Supervisor, they may terminate a student's candidature.

Part F - Progress Reports

(25) Candidates will, through their Principal Supervisor and relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training, submit progress reports to the Manager, Graduate School in the prescribed form and at the prescribed times.

(26) The Principal Supervisor and the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training will at the same time provide comments to the Manager, Graduate School on the progress of the candidate being supervised.

(27) The Manager, Graduate School may then:

- a. take no action;
- b. recommend that the Candidate undertake remedial action; or,
- c. recommend termination of the candidature to the Dean, Graduate School where:
 - i. progress reports have demonstrated unsatisfactory progress; or
 - ii. progress reports have not been submitted by the due dates.

(28) The Dean, Graduate School will consider any recommendation made under clause (27) and may terminate candidature at their discretion.

Part G - Confirmation of Candidature

(29) All Professional Doctorate Candidates will serve a confirmation period, no longer than six months full-time or twelve months part-time once enrolled in the Professional Doctorate Thesis Unit.

(30) The process of assessment of the confirmation period will be developed within a general framework approved by the Higher Degrees Research Committee, to be used in the respective Faculty or College.

(31) Candidates must submit their Confirmation of Candidature proposal:

- a. according to the agreed assessment framework;
- b. for text-matching analysis in accordance with the [Text Matching Software Higher Degree by Research Procedures](#); and
- c. prior to the Confirmation of Candidature presentation date; and
- d. according to the guidelines from the relevant Faculty or College.

(32) The Dean, Graduate School will make one of the following determinations, based on the Candidate's Confirmation of Candidature proposal, the agreed assessment framework and the Panel's recommendations:

- a. Confirmed, with no further work required;
- b. Confirmed, with minor changes recommended by the Confirmation Committee to the satisfaction of the Principal Supervisor;
- c. Conditionally confirmed after major revisions to the literature review and research plan as recommended by the Confirmation Committee and made within three months to the satisfaction of the Confirmation Committee (resubmission and final sign-off to be coordinated by the Chair of the Confirmation Committee);
- d. Not confirmed but the Candidate is required to revise and resubmit their paper and make another presentation within four months;
- e. Remedial Action or recommended transfer to Masters by Research;
- f. Not confirmed and candidature is terminated.

Part H - Thesis

(33) On completion of studies during candidature, a Candidate will submit a thesis that complies with the following requirements:

- a. the greater proportion of the work described must have been completed after initial enrolment as a Candidate;

and

- b. it must show evidence of competence in research and scholarship, and must make an original and significant contribution to knowledge; and
- c. it must be in English and reach a satisfactory standard of presentation; and
- d. it must have a substantial written component but may also contain a significant amount of non-written material.

(34) The thesis will consist of the Candidate's own account of the work, except that, in special cases, work done jointly with other persons may be accepted provided the Dean, Graduate School is satisfied in respect of the Candidate's part in the joint work. Candidates must adhere to the principles for authorship and research best practice as outlined in the University's [Research Quality Standards and Integrity Policy](#) and [Research Publications, Dissemination and Authorship Procedures](#).

(35) On submitting a thesis, the Candidate will present sufficient evidence of its authenticity and originality, and to this end will submit a written statement at the front of the thesis:

- a. indicating which portions are original and which are not; and
- b. giving the sources of information if these are not adequately indicated in the thesis; and
- c. indicating whether, and if so to what extent, any of the material submitted, or work on which it is based, has been used in seeking another degree in the University or elsewhere.

(36) A Candidate will submit with, but separately from, the thesis a short abstract of the thesis comprising not more than 400 words and written in a form suitable for publication.

(37) A Candidate may not submit as the main content of the thesis any work or material which has previously been accepted for a degree or other similar award but will not be precluded from incorporating such work or material in the thesis, provided that the Candidate indicates, generally in the preface and specifically in the notes, the work or material which has been so incorporated.

(38) The Candidate may submit as supporting documents any work published by the candidate, but only if it bears on the subject of the thesis.

Part I - Thesis Submission

(39) Candidates must submit the final draft of their thesis for text-matching analysis in accordance with the [Text Matching Software Higher Degree by Research Procedures](#).

(40) A Candidate will present a thesis for examination a minimum of two months prior to their maximum duration of candidature. The Manager, Graduate School may approve an extension of time in special circumstances.

(41) A Candidate will, through the Principal Supervisor and relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training, give the Graduate School two months' written notice of intention to submit a thesis and such notice will be accompanied by the appropriate fee, if any.

(42) The Candidate will prepare an electronic copy their thesis as prescribed by the Graduate School and submit it to the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training.

(43) The thesis will be submitted to the Graduate School by the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training with a certificate signed by the Principal Supervisor certifying that the Candidate's work, including the thesis, is in a form suitable for examination.

(44) If the Principal Supervisor does not recommend the thesis as being suitable for examination, the Candidate may seek a review of this decision (see clause (78)).

Part J - Thesis Examination

(45) The Dean, Graduate School will appoint two examiners both of whom will be external to the University. A supervisor of a Candidate will not also be an Examiner of that Candidate. Each Examiner will make a separate report and recommendation on the merit of the thesis and any other work submitted for examination. Examiners should be appointed in accordance with the Examiner Conflict of Interest Guidelines

(46) The Examiners' reports on a thesis will be forwarded to the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training and the Principal Supervisor who will then forward the reports to the Candidate.

(47) Candidates are required to undertake changes to their thesis in response to Examiners' reports in accordance with the following timelines:

- a. Full time Candidates - within three months of the date of notification of the Examiner's reports.
- b. Part time Candidates - within six months of the date of notification of the Examiner's reports.

(48) The Director, Higher Degree Research and Principal Supervisor are required to review the revised thesis and submit a report on the changes made by the Candidate for final ratification by the Dean, Graduate School no later than six months after the original notification of these to the student (unless a longer period is approved by the Dean, Graduate School).

(49) The Dean, Graduate School may require:

- a. the Candidate to address any matters raised in the Examiners' reports,
- b. the Candidate to address additional issues in the thesis,
- c. re-examination of the thesis within six months if full-time, or within one year if part-time.

(50) A Candidate whose thesis fails re-examination, as conducted under conditions prescribed by the Dean, Graduate School, will have their candidature terminated and will not be eligible for re-enrolment in a Professional Doctorate in the same topic area.

(51) Where the Dean, Graduate School is satisfied that the Candidate meets the requirements for the award of Professional Doctorate, the Dean will recommend that the award be conferred.

(52) Where a Candidate is recommended for the award of degree they are notified by the Graduate School.

(53) A Candidate will be required to submit a digital copy of their final thesis to the Graduate School.

(54) The digital copy of the thesis will be submitted to the Graduate School using the prescribed form. This digital copy will be:

- a. included in the institutional repository for archival purposes; and
- b. made available on open online access unless an application to restrict access is made and decided in accordance with clauses (55) and (56). Some third party copyright material contained in the thesis may need to be removed to provide online access. This will be done on the advice of the University's Copyright Officer.

(55) The copies of the thesis deposited with the University Library will be available for consultation, loan, or copying at the discretion of the University Librarian, unless the University on the application of the Candidate determines that it will not be available until after the expiry of a period, which will not normally exceed two years. The University Librarian will require each user and recipient of a copy of a thesis to undertake in writing to respect the author's rights under the law relating to copyright.

(56) A Candidate may, when lodging a thesis, make an application on the prescribed form to the Dean, Graduate School, to restrict access to a thesis, either in whole or in part, and in all formats. The Dean, Graduate School, will decide such an application in accordance with the terms detailed on the prescribed form. Normally, access may be restricted for a period up to two years. In special cases, application may be made to restrict access for a longer period. Where the thesis contains material which the candidate considers should have restricted distribution, the Principal Supervisor, the Dean, Graduate School, and the Examiners will be informed which parts are classified.

(57) Where a Candidate states that a thesis contains confidential information which the Candidate does not desire to be disclosed freely, or which the Candidate is not at liberty to disclose freely, the Candidate may, to the extent that it is possible, place that information in an appendix to the thesis. The copy of the thesis deposited in the University Library will have a notation, authorised by the Manager, Graduate School, indicating which parts of the thesis are not included because they contain confidential information, and informing the reader to contact the Candidate for further information.

Part K - Termination of Candidature

(58) The Dean, Graduate School may terminate a candidature at their discretion at any time where they determine that a Candidate has failed to maintain satisfactory academic progress under clause (13)c.

(59) The Dean, Graduate School may terminate a student's candidature on any other reasonable grounds.

Part L - Duration of Candidature, Recreation Leave, Leave of Absence/Interruption, Cancellation

Duration of Candidature

(60) The maximum duration of candidature is three years full-time, or six years part-time, inclusive of the coursework units. This does not include approved extensions or periods of approved leave of absence/interruption.

(61) The Manager, Graduate School, on the recommendation of the Principal Supervisor and relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training, may approve an extension or leave of absence/interruption for a period or periods totaling no more than one year.

Recreation Leave

(62) Candidates are entitled to 20 days of Recreation Leave per equivalent full-time year. Recreation Leave will be available in the first year of candidature on a pro rata basis.

(63) A maximum of 20 days of Recreation Leave may be accrued. That is, unused leave in one year does not ordinarily carryover and must be taken during the year it is accrued.

(64) Proposed dates for Recreation Leave should be discussed with the Principal Supervisor in the first instance. Recreation Leave requires the approval of the Principal Supervisor and the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training who must advise the Graduate School.

Leave of Absence/Interruption

(65) The Dean, Graduate School may approve a leave of absence/interruption beyond one year, at their discretion and on the recommendation of the Manager, Graduate School.

(66) Unless the Manager, Graduate School, or the Dean, Graduate School otherwise determines, a Candidate will maintain continuous enrolment until all requirements for award of the degree have been met.

International Candidates

(67) International Candidates are responsible for managing and maintaining their visa conditions and are required to consider how requesting a leave of absence may affect their student visa.

(68) When international Candidates apply for a leave of absence, the Graduate School will provide general advice about the possible implications on their current visa and strongly encourage Candidates to contact the [Department of Home Affairs](#) for further information.

Cancellation and Lapsed Candidature

(69) A Candidate may cancel their enrolment at any time by giving written notice to the Graduate School.

(70) A Candidate who exceeds the maximum duration of candidature without an approved extension, will be deemed to be, and recorded as having 'lapsed candidature'. A lapsed candidate may apply to the Graduate School for re-admission to candidature for the purpose of submitting a thesis. If the re-admission is approved, the thesis must be submitted within one calendar month and sent for examination.

(71) An application for re-admission must be made within the following time periods:

- a. Candidates who were enrolled full-time when their candidature lapsed – up to six months from the notification of lapse of candidature;
- b. Candidates who were enrolled part-time when their candidature lapsed – up to twelve months from the notification of lapse of candidature.

(72) A lapsed Candidate will be considered to have failed and their candidature will be terminated in the following circumstances:

- a. The Candidate's failure to apply for re-admission prior to the timelines set out in clause (71)
- b. The Candidate's re-admission application is rejected; or
- c. The Candidate's failure to submit a thesis within the one calendar month following readmission.

(73) Within eight weeks of a Candidate becoming a lapsed Candidate, the Principal Supervisor will provide the Manager, Graduate School with a written report on the reasons for the Candidate's failure to submit a thesis within the maximum period of candidature. The Manager, Graduate School may seek further information from the Principal Supervisor, Candidate or other members of the supervisory team concerning the unsuccessful candidature.

Section 2 - Query and Appeal

Coursework Appeals

(74) Appeals relating to coursework units should be lodged according to the relevant sections of the [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations](#).

Thesis Unit Appeals

Query of Review of Progress Reports

(75) A Candidate who is not satisfied with the review of progress reports under clause (27) may query the outcome with the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training.

(76) A candidate who is not satisfied with the result of discussions arising from clause (75) may query the outcome in

writing with the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor within 10 working days of the date that the original outcome notification was sent to the candidate. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor may uphold the original decision or, where deemed appropriate, vary the decision.

Query of Review of Assessment of Completion of Confirmation Period

(77) A candidate who is not satisfied with the Assessment of Completion of the Confirmation of Period under clause 32 may query the outcome in writing with the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor within 10 working days of the date of the original outcome notification to the candidate.

Query of Decision Not to Submit Thesis

(78) A Candidate who is not satisfied with a decision not to submit a thesis for examination will follow the process below:

- a. contact the Principal Supervisor to discuss the matter;
- b. if dissatisfied with the result of the discussion in clause (78) above, contact the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research Training;
- c. if dissatisfied with the result of the discussion in clause (78) above, a query of the decision shall be made in writing to the Dean, Graduate School including the Candidate's reasons for wishing to submit without the Principal Supervisor's approval.

(79) The Dean, Graduate School is not obliged to accede to the request, but if the Dean does agree, the Examiners will be advised that the thesis did not have the support of the Principal Supervisor after they have provided their reports.

Appeal Against Review of Progress Reports or Assessment of Completion of Confirmation Period

(80) A Candidate who is not satisfied with the determination of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor in relation to the Review of Progress Reports under (76) or the Assessment of Completion of Confirmation Period under clause (74) may appeal on the prescribed form to the Academic Board Appeals Committee on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. improper action in the conduct of the review or assessment process;
- b. irregularity in the conduct of the review or assessment;
- c. negligence on the part of any person involved in the conduct of the review or assessment;
- d. discrimination against the Candidate which is unlawful under state or federal legislation;
- e. prejudice or bias on the part of any person involved in determining the outcome of the review or assessment;
- f. the process as detailed in the Supervisor-Candidate Agreement or similar document or any subsequent amendment not being followed;
- g. where additional evidence for special consideration can be provided, or where procedures for consideration of an application for special consideration were not properly followed.

(81) An appeal made under clause (80) must be lodged with the Secretary, Academic Board Appeals Committee, within 10 working days of the date of sending of formal notification of the determination of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Appeal Against Decision not to Submit Thesis

(82) A Candidate who is not satisfied with the determination of the Dean, Graduate School under clause (78) may appeal on the prescribed form to the Academic Board Appeals Committee on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. improper action in the conduct of the examination submission process;

- b. irregularity in the conduct of the examination submission process;
- c. negligence on the part of any person involved in the conduct of the examination submission process;
- d. discrimination against the candidate which is unlawful under State or Federal legislation;
- e. prejudice or bias on the part of any person involved in determining the outcome of the examination submission process;
- f. the examination submission requirements as detailed in the Supervisor-Candidate Agreement or similar document or any subsequent amendment not being followed; or
- g. where additional evidence for special consideration can be provided, or where procedures for consideration of an application for special consideration were not properly followed.

(83) An appeal made under clause (82) must be lodged with the Secretary, Academic Board Appeals Committee, within 10 working days of the date of sending of formal notification of the decision of the Dean, Graduate School.

(84) If the appeal is upheld and the thesis forwarded for examination, then the certificate will be signed by the Chair, Academic Board Appeals Committee, and neither the Principal Supervisor nor the Director, Higher Degree Research Training nor the Dean, Graduate School will be required to sign it.

Appeal Against Additional Examination Requirements and Failure of Admission to the Degree

(85) A Candidate who is not satisfied with the determination of the Dean, Graduate School under clauses (49), or (50) may appeal on the prescribed form to the Academic Board Appeals Committee on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. improper action in the conduct of the examination process;
- b. irregularity in the conduct of the examination process;
- c. negligence on the part of any person involved in the conduct of the examination process;
- d. discrimination against the Candidate which is unlawful under State or Federal legislation;
- e. prejudice or bias on the part of any person involved in determining the outcome of the examination process;
- f. the examination requirements as detailed in the Supervisor-Candidate Agreement or similar document or any subsequent amendment not being followed; or
- g. where additional evidence for special consideration can be provided, or where procedures for consideration of an application for special consideration were not properly followed.

(86) An appeal made under clause (85) will be lodged with the Secretary, Academic Board Appeals Committee, within 10 working days of the date of sending of formal notification of the decision of the Dean, Graduate School.

Appeal Against Termination of Enrolment

Termination due to Unsatisfactory Progress

(87) A Candidate whose enrolment is terminated under clause (58) may appeal that decision to the Academic Board Appeals Committee on the following grounds:

- a. clause (58) was unreasonably applied; or
- b. there were exceptional circumstances not likely to continue which contributed to unsatisfactory progress.

Termination due to Exceeding Maximum Tenure or Refusal of Re-admission

(88) A Candidate whose enrolment is terminated under clause (72) may appeal that decision to the Academic Board Appeals Committee on the grounds that clause (72) was unreasonably applied.

Termination due to inability to identify replacement supervisor

(89) A Candidate whose enrolment is terminated under clause (24) may appeal on the ground that the Dean, Graduate School did not take reasonable steps to identify a replacement supervisor under clause (23).

Termination on any other reasonable grounds

(90) A Candidate whose enrolment is terminated under clause (59) may appeal on the ground that the grounds upon which the candidature was terminated were not reasonable.

(91) An appeal under clauses (87), (89) or (90) must be lodged with the Secretary, Academic Board Appeals Committee on the prescribed form within 10 working days of the date of the notice of termination.

(92) A Candidate whose appeal against termination of enrolment is unsuccessful will have their termination of enrolment confirmed in writing.

Late Appeals

(93) A late appeal under these Rules may be received at the discretion of the Chair, Academic Board Appeals Committee where the Candidate is able to satisfy the Chair that the appeal was lodged late through no fault of the Candidate.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	22nd September 2025
Review Date	22nd September 2028
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	22nd September 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Mary Spongberg Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor +61 7 55893361
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