

# Higher Degree Research Candidature and Supervision - Procedures

## Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

### Purpose

- (1) These Procedures give effect to the Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervisor Policy and provide a clear set of parameters within which Supervisors and Graduate Researchers may negotiate the details of research and supervision.
- (2) These Procedures adopt the principles detailed in the Southern Cross University [Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervisor Policy](#).
- (3) These Procedures facilitate a professional relationship between Supervisors and their Graduate Researchers that is characterised by mutual respect and trust.
- (4) These Procedures support compliance with Section 4.2 of the [Australian Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#).
- (5) These Procedures support compliance of research activities with the Australian Code for the [Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Code) and adopt the following:
  - a. [NHMRC Supervision Guide](#)
  - b. [Australian Council of Graduate Research Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships](#).
- (6) These Procedures adopt the criteria for appointment of supervisors as outlined in the [Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy](#).
- (7) These Procedures should be read together with the following:
  - a. [Australian Research Council Research Integrity Policy](#)
  - b. [AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research 2020](#)
  - c. [National Health and Medical Research Council's Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders](#)
  - d. [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#)
  - e. [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#)
  - f. [Rules Relating to Awards, Rule 7 – Masters by Thesis Awards](#)
  - g. [Rules Relating to Awards, Rule 8 – Professional Doctorate Awards](#)
  - h. [Rules Relating to Awards, Rule 9 – Doctor of Philosophy \(PhD\)](#)
  - i. [Research Quality Standards and Integrity Policy](#)
  - j. [Research Integrity Procedures – Staff](#)
  - k. [Research Integrity Procedures – Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\)](#)
  - l. [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#)

- m. [Research Integrity Advisor Procedures](#)
- n. [Code of Conduct](#)
- o. [Work Health Safety Policy](#)
- p. [Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Prevention Policy](#)
- q. [Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#)
- r. [Joint Doctoral Enrolments \(Cotutelle\) Policy](#)
- s. [Universities Australia Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships](#).

## Scope

(8) These Procedures apply to Higher Degree by Research (Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Professional Doctorate and Masters by Thesis Graduate Researchers, Supervisors, Faculties, Colleges and Special Research Centres involved in Higher Degree by Research candidacy.

## Section 2 - Definitions

(9) The following definitions apply to these Procedures

- a. Associate Supervisor is a supervisor of a Graduate Researcher who may or may not be a staff member of Southern Cross University, who has relevant expertise to the project but has not been appointed to an Adjunct position.
- b. Author means an individual who has made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to research and its output and who has agreed to be listed as an author.
- c. Close Personal Relationship is one which gives rise to a real or potential conflict of interest and includes relatives, spouses (including de facto spouses), romantic and sexual partners, and financial relationships.
- d. [Code means the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018](#).
- e. Conflict of Interest exists in a situation where an independent observer might reasonably conclude that the professional actions of a person are or may be unduly influenced by other interests. This refers to a financial or non-financial interest which may be perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest.
- f. Co-Supervisor is a University registered supervisor of a Graduate Researcher who shares workload responsibility, in terms of the research and research supervision, with the Principal Supervisor. Co-Supervisors are involved in, and contribute to, the administration of supervisory process. A Co-Supervisor may have a greater supervisory contribution than the Principal Supervisor if they are more appropriate for the supervision of the project but cannot fulfill the role of Principal Supervisor. The criteria for appointment as a Co-Supervisor is detailed in the University's [Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy](#).
- g. Director, Higher Degree Research is the individual appointed in each Faculty or College who is dedicated to managing and facilitating the Higher Degrees Research program. Each Director, Higher Degree Research is a member of the University's Higher Degrees Research Committee (HDRC).
- h. Gender-based Violence means any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy.
- i. Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to a category of artificial intelligence algorithms that generate new content. This content can be in various forms including text, images, and code
- j. Graduate Researcher is a person who has been accepted for admission to, or is enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Professional Doctorate or Masters by Thesis offered at, or in conjunction with, Southern Cross University.
- k. Higher Degree by Research Student means a Graduate Researcher or Candidate.
- l. NHMRC means the National Health and Medical Research Council.

- m. Principal Supervisor is a University registered supervisor of a Graduate Researcher who is responsible and accountable for the Graduate Researcher's supervision, and for the administration of supervisory process (e.g. completion and submission of progress reports, recommendation of examiners, etc), and who normally has the majority load of supervision. The criteria for appointment as a Principal Supervisor is detailed in the University's [Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy](#).
- n. Research - the concept of research is broad and includes the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. For the purposes of these Procedures, research includes research training
- o. Research outputs communicate or make available the findings of research that may be in hardcopy, electronic or other form. Examples of research outputs include, but are not limited to journal articles, book chapters, books, conference papers, reports, open access repositories, datasets, patents and patent applications, performances, videos and exhibitions
- p. Researcher means a person who conducts, or assists with the conduct of, research.
- q. Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) is a person or persons with knowledge of the Code and institutional processes nominated by the University to promote the responsible conduct of research and provide advice to those with concerns or complaints about potential breaches of the Code.
- r. Staff (for the purpose of this Policy) means all persons who are academic or professional employees of Southern Cross University, including full time, part time, fixed term and casual and all adjunct, visiting, emeritus and conjoint appointees who are engaged in supervisory and other research roles on behalf of the University.
- s. University Processes includes references to Rules, Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Standards.

## Section 3 - Application and admission

(10) Admission to Candidature will follow the procedure specified in the relevant Award rule.

(11) Faculties and Colleges will

- a. ensure that reasonable space, facilities, and resources are made available to Graduate Researchers, as appropriate to the field of study, facilitate compliance with the University's [Work Health Safety Policy](#) and as required for the scope agreed to in the Supervisor Candidate Agreement.
- b. maximise the likelihood of the Graduate Researcher's success by ensuring that:
  - i. the applicant is eligible and qualified for admission to candidature.
  - ii. the applicant has demonstrated capacity to undertake the program in the required amount of time.
  - iii. the proposed research is appropriate and feasible for the degree.
  - iv. information is available to prospective Graduate Researchers about the research interests and academic experience of academic staff.
  - v. the Graduate Researcher can be appropriately supervised as detailed in clause (37) to clause (48).
- c. when the Graduate Researcher is an international student, adhere to the requirements of the [Education Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\) Act](#) and associated legislation, including the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#).
- d. in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#), declare and minimise any potential conflicts of interest between Graduate Researchers and Supervisors by ensuring:
  - i. no Supervisor is in a Close Personal Relationship with the Graduate Researcher.
  - ii. no Principal Supervisor is a direct manager of a Graduate Researcher who is a permanent employee of the university.
  - iii. supervisory teams do not include Supervisors who are in a Close Personal Relationship.

## Section 4 - Enrolment and Orientation

(12) The Graduate School will:

- a. ensure adequate and accurate information is provided prior to enrolment
- b. ensure induction and orientation procedures are followed by Supervisors and Graduate Researchers.
- c. make available to each Graduate Researcher at enrolment:
  - i. a mandatory orientation program comprising an initial workshop and further training through the course of the candidature. This program will include research integrity and the responsibilities of researchers under the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
  - ii. the relevant policies, including this document, the Higher Research Candidate and Supervision Policy, and the [Research Integrity Procedures Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\)](#), and Specific Award Rules governing the appropriate degree; and
  - iii. general guidance for all aspects of candidature, including the thesis examination process, and outlining, in particular, the University's expectations for research higher degrees.
- d. make available to each Supervisor, relevant policies, including this document, the Higher Degree Research Candidate and Supervision Policy, the [Research Integrity Procedures \(Staff\)](#), and the appropriate Rule governing the degree.
- e. ensure all Supervisors are aware of the necessity to implement the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), and are aware, where applicable, of the working procedures of the ethics committees.

(13) The Dean, Graduate School will be responsible for approving the appointment of Supervisors prior to the commencement of Candidature with consideration of the [HDR Register of Supervisors Policy](#).

(14) Supervisors will:

- a. support Graduate Researchers in undertaking Orientation as soon as possible at the beginning of their program of research
- b. have a thorough understanding of the University's current Rules, Policies, Procedures and Guidelines so that accurate advice and appropriate support is given to the Graduate Researcher.
- c. familiarise themselves with and abide by the University's [Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Prevention Policy](#).
- d. have a good understanding of the University's [Research Integrity Procedures \(Staff\)](#) and [Research Integrity Procedures - Higher Degree Researcher \(Students\)](#).
- e. ensure that the research can be conducted in a manner that complies with the University's [Work Health Safety Policy](#).
- f. in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#), declare the existence of, or the potential for, a conflict of interest, in relation to any Graduate Researcher under their supervision or proposed for supervision.
- g. negotiate an agreement of work to be done and schedules to be adhered to with the Graduate Researcher utilising the Supervisor Candidate Agreement Form.
- h. Maintain professional boundaries at all times.
  - i. Not engage in behaviour that could reasonably be perceived as sexual, intimidating, coercive, or exploitative.

(15) Graduate Researchers will:

- a. meet with the Graduate School through video-conferencing for an introductory meeting and online induction upon commencement of candidature.
- b. undertake Orientation as soon as possible after commencing candidature.

- c. familiarise themselves with the processes and practices of candidature in particular, and Southern Cross University's Rules, Policies and Procedures more broadly.
- d. develop an understanding of the responsibilities of researchers under the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.
- e. familiarise themselves with University policies on research integrity, academic integrity and academic misconduct, authorship and with the [Research Integrity Procedures - Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\)](#).
- f. in accordance with the [Code of Conduct](#) declare the existence of, or the potential for, a conflict of interest, in relation to any appointed or proposed Supervisors.
- g. negotiate an agreement of work to be done and schedules to be adhered to with Supervisors utilising the Supervisor Candidate Agreement Form.

## Section 5 - Safe and Respectful Supervisory Relationships

(16) The Graduate School will ensure that Graduate Researchers receive information at commencement of candidature outlining:

- a. expected standards of supervisory conduct;
- b. examples of inappropriate or unacceptable conduct within supervisory relationships;
- c. reporting options that do not require disclosure to a member of the supervisory panel; and
- d. available support services.

(17) Appointment and continuation of Supervisors on the Register of Supervisors is conditional on completion of training addressing respectful supervisory relationships, power imbalance, and obligations relating to prevention and response to gender-based violence.

(18) Where a Graduate Researcher raises concerns relating to gender-based violence involving a supervisor, the matter may be reported in accordance with clause (70) of these Procedures, or via institutional gender-based violence reporting pathways, in accordance with the [Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#), without prejudice to candidature.

## Section 6 - Supervisory Team Management

(19) A supervisory team for a Graduate Researcher will be recommended by the relevant Director, Higher Degree Research to the Dean, Graduate School.

(20) The Dean, Graduate School will appoint Supervisors to a supervisory team prior to the commencement of the Candidature.

(21) No person may be appointed as a Principal Supervisor or Co-Supervisor unless they meet the requirements of the [Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy](#) and appear on the HDR Supervisor Register.

(22) Each supervisory team will have a minimum complement of one Principal Supervisor and one Co-Supervisor.

(23) The subject knowledge and skill base of the supervisory team must be sufficient to facilitate the successful completion of the research.

(24) For research connected to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities or cultures, the Dean, Gribi College must be consulted on the composition of the supervisory team.

(25) An individual will not normally be part of more than ten supervisory teams.

(26) A request to join a further supervisory team once the maximum of ten has been reached must be made in writing to the Dean, Graduate School.

(27) The Director, Higher Degree Research or nominee may recommend the addition or removal of members of the supervision team at any stage of candidature. Proposed changes must be discussed with the Graduate Researcher, agreed to by the new appointee and approved by the Dean, Graduate School.

(28) The Director, Higher Degree Research or nominee can recommend the removal of a person from the supervision team if that person does not meet the requirements of the [Higher Degree Research Register of Supervisors Policy](#) or these Procedures.

(29) If the Principal or Co-supervisor is unavailable for more than four weeks, or leaves the University, the Director, Higher Degree Research must recommend a replacement, either temporarily or permanently, according to the circumstances.

(30) Replacement Supervisors are appointed by the Dean, Graduate School in alignment with clause (37) to clause (43).

## **Section 7 - Planning and Management of Candidature**

(31) One or more members of the supervisory team will normally meet with the Graduate Researcher at least twice monthly (physically or electronically).

(32) The Graduate Researcher will document the meeting and the supervisor will confirm the record of the meeting.

(33) Supervisors will engage with Graduate Researchers to ensure that they have met the compulsory requirements of candidature including:

- a. negotiation of the Supervisor Candidate Agreement
- b. completion of orientation
- c. research integrity training
- d. safety training (where relevant)
- e. progress reports.

(34) The Supervisor Candidate Agreement will be negotiated prior to enrolment, and should be reviewed throughout the duration of the candidature.

(35) If a new Supervisor is appointed, or supervisory roles change, the Supervisor Candidate Agreement must be reviewed and a new agreement signed and submitted.

(36) Supervisors will:

- a. ensure Graduate Researchers provide them with written work on a pre-arranged, regular and agreed basis and will return such work with constructive criticism within one month or less as appropriate.
- b. help the Graduate Researcher plan the research program.
- c. provide the Graduate Researcher with project management strategies where transparent goals, expectations, and timelines for the research are articulated.

- d. ensure the Graduate Researcher obtains any necessary ethics approvals to conduct the research.
- e. provide support to the Graduate Researcher to respond to examination reports.

(37) The Principal Supervisor has the main supervisory responsibility for the Graduate Researcher, and is responsible for directing the work of the Graduate Researcher and for ensuring that the Graduate Researcher meets all administrative and academic requirements. The Principal Supervisor located in the Faculty or College in which the Graduate Researcher is enrolled, must:

- a. undertake administrative roles and general oversight associated with Graduate Researcher's academic progression, including comment and sign off of Graduate Researcher progress reports and Confirmation of Candidature reports.
- b. ensure reports are made regularly as required on the Graduate Researcher's progress.
- c. confirm the thesis is properly presented and conforms to the University's Rules, and that the work is of a suitable standard for examination.
- d. recommend potential examiners to the Dean, Graduate School at least three months prior to the submission of the work.
- e. ensure that the names of the Examiners are not disclosed to the Graduate Researcher prior to the submission of the thesis, nor released after the examination process is completed, unless agreed to by the Examiners.

(38) Graduate Researchers will:

- a. maintain regular contact with the Supervisor(s) and ensure that a reasonable timetable of meetings and submitted work is agreed and maintained, as described in clause (54a) to clause (54c).
- b. submit, with assistance from Supervisors, any ethics applications required for the research to take place.
- c. complete confirmation of candidature and additional requirements as set by the Dean, Graduate School, at the required time; present required written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before scheduled meetings.
- d. complete progress reports as required by the University.
- e. advise the Graduate School of, or apply for in the prescribed manner, any changes to conditions of enrolment.
- f. after consultation with their Supervisors, advise the Graduate School two months prior to the intended submission date of intent to submit their thesis.
- g. prepare the thesis for examination, including arrangements for its proofreading, printing and binding.
- h. work with their Supervisors and Director, Higher Degree Research on the Table of Changes following the examination of the thesis, and provide the Graduate School with all requested materials following the recommendation of award of degree.
- i. where the Graduate Researcher is an international student, ensure the degree is completed within the timeframe of their Confirmation of Enrolment.

## **Section 8 - Managing Research and Academic Integrity**

(39) Supervisors and Graduate Researcher will have a good understanding of their responsibilities as researchers under the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

(40) Supervisors and Graduate Researchers must be familiar with University policies including; [Research Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#); [Research Integrity Procedures \(Staff\)](#), [Research Integrity Procedures Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\)](#), and Research Integrity Advisor Procedures.

(41) In the case of concerns regarding research integrity, it is recommended that in the first instance, discussions be held at a local level between the Graduate Researcher and the supervisory team.

(42) If the concerns are not alleviated at a local level, or it is not possible to have those conversations, an appropriate Research Integrity Advisor (RIA) should be contacted to discuss the concerns.

(43) The concern will then be managed according to the Research Integrity Advisor.

(44) Concerns regarding breaches of academic integrity should be dealt with according to the [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#).

(45) Academic Integrity encompasses the appropriate and inappropriate use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI).

## Section 9 - Monitoring Candidate Progress

(46) Supervisors will monitor the performance of the Graduate Researcher relative to the standard required for the degree and in line with the relevant Award rule.

(47) Where a Supervisor has not been able to contact a Graduate Researcher, or a Graduate Researcher has not been able to contact their Supervisor, for more than four weeks following a scheduled meeting, they will advise the Director, Higher Degree Research.

(48) Supervisors will ensure that inadequate progress, or work below the standard expected, is brought to the Graduate Researcher's attention and documented, and the Graduate Researcher is given an opportunity to improve.

(49) Where international Graduate Researchers are involved, the ESOS and National Code requirements must be met, or any breaches are to be reported to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Director, Global.

(50) The Supervisors will help with developing solutions to problems as they are identified.

(51) Continuing unsatisfactory progress must be reported to the Director, Higher Degree Research, and formally advised to the Graduate Researcher.

(52) Supervisors, in consultation with the Director, Higher Degree Research, will ensure that confirmation of candidature committees are established to assess the performance of the Graduate Researcher against the compulsory criteria and within the required time period.

## Section 10 - Support and Training

(53) The Graduate School will:

- a. provide mandatory Supervisor training on an annual basis.
- b. provide a range of additional training opportunities relevant to research supervision.
- c. actively promote training opportunities relevant to research supervision external to the University.
- d. provide access to a comprehensive suite of HDR training opportunities encompassing topics including but not limited to:
  - i. academic writing
  - ii. communicating research
  - iii. planning a research program
  - iv. promoting research externally

- v. research impact
- vi. confirmation and thesis preparation
- vii. seeking and utilising feedback
- viii. opportunities and challenges presented by Generative Artificial Intelligence
- ix. self-care as a researcher

(54) The Faculty or College will support Supervisors in accessing training opportunities relevant to research supervision.

(55) Supervisors will:

- a. undertake mandatory University Supervisor training at least every three years
- b. actively engage with all training opportunities relevant to their skill requirements.

(56) Graduate Researchers will:

- a. participate in the University HDR training program
- b. actively engage with all training opportunities relevant to their skill requirements

## **Section 11 - Managing Conflict and Respectful Supervisory Relationships**

(57) In the first instance, it is recommended that complaints or interpersonal conflicts relating to a supervisory relationship be dealt with by the supervision team on an informal basis.

(58) The supervision team will immediately address any conflict that arises between Supervisors and the Graduate Researcher.

(59) Where conflict between Supervisor(s) and Graduate Researcher cannot be resolved, the Principal Supervisor will seek assistance.

- a. first from the Director, Higher Degree Research (or their line manager if the Principal Supervisor is the Director, HDR).
- b. if the Director, HDR cannot resolve the matter then they will refer the matter to the Dean, Graduate School or Manager, Graduate School who may arrange independent mediation if required.

(60) Both the Graduate Researcher and Supervisor will be offered support during the conflict resolution process.

(61) The Principal Supervisor will maintain records of agreements reached at the outcome of the conflict.

(62) Graduate Researchers may, at any time, utilise the provisions for making a complaint detailed in the [Complaints Policy – Students and Members of the Public](#).

(63) The University recognises that there is a power imbalance in the Graduate Researcher – Supervisor relationship and that the greater power rests with the Supervisor.

(64) A sexual or romantic relationship between a Supervisor and Graduate Researcher is never appropriate.

(65) If a relationship occurs, the Supervisor must inform the Director, Higher Degree Research immediately.

(66) The Director, Higher Degree Research must remove the Supervisor from the team and recommend a replacement to the Dean, Graduate School in line with clause (28) to clause (30).

(67) Southern Cross University has zero tolerance towards sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexist behaviour and gender-based violence. These behaviours are unacceptable, prohibited and, in some cases, criminal.

(68) A Graduate Researcher or Supervisor who experiences sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexist behaviour or gender-based violence should follow the procedures outlined in the [Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence \(Prevention and Response\) Policy](#).

(69) Staff members may make a report or complaint to:

- a. Work Health and Safety Team via the online portal, RiskWare; or
- b. their direct supervisor; or
- c. Complaints Assistance Officer, by telephone +61 2 6620 3849 or email [complaints@scu.edu.au](mailto:complaints@scu.edu.au).

(70) Graduate Researchers may make a report or complaint to:

- a. Work Health and Safety Team via the online portal, RiskWare;
- b. Complaints Assistance Officer, by telephone +61 2 6620 3849 or email [complaints@scu.edu.au](mailto:complaints@scu.edu.au).
- c. a trusted member of staff who can refer the Graduate Researcher to support services.

## Section 12 - Associated Documents

(71) Supervisor Candidate Agreement Form

(72) [Graduate Attributes Schedule](#).

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	18th June 2026
<b>Review Date</b>	24th September 2027
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