



# Higher Degree Research (HDR) Candidature Policy

Effective Date: 2025.08.11

Last Reviewed: 2025.07.01

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify the parameters of candidature in an Alphacrucis University College (AC) Higher Degree Research (HDR) course of study.

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## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all HDR courses of study, HDR Students, Supervisors and the Graduate Research School Faculty.

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## 3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Confirmation of Candidature:** a formal milestone (usually 12 months after commencement for full-time HDR students) where the candidate's research proposal is evaluated. Successful confirmation leads to full candidature status.
- 3.2. **Domestic Student:** a student who is an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or an Australian permanent resident (or otherwise not required to hold a student visa to study in Australia).
- 3.3. **Higher Degree Research (HDR) Candidature:** the period during which a student is enrolled in an HDR course, involving milestones such as research proposal approval, regular progress reviews, and the final submission of a thesis.
- 3.4. **Higher Degree Research (HDR) Course:** an advanced academic program that focuses primarily on independent research, where students conduct original research under the guidance of a supervisor and contribute new knowledge to their field of study.
- 3.5. **International/Overseas Student:** a student who holds an Australian student visa and must comply with Australian student visa conditions whether they are studying inside or outside of Australia.
- 3.6. **Offshore Student:** a student who is intending to study at an overseas location and not in an Australian campus or at an Australian address, and is not subject to international/overseas student visa requirements.
- 3.7. **Provisional Candidature:** the initial enrolment status of an HDR candidate prior to formal Confirmation of Candidature. All candidates admitted to an HDR program at AC are considered provisional candidates until they successfully complete the confirmation milestone within the required timeframe.
- 3.8. **Supervisor:** an academic staff member who provides guidance, support, and mentorship to students undertaking research-based degrees.

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## 4. Policy Statement

### 4.1. HDR Candidature Status

- 4.1.1. AC HDR candidates are initially admitted as "provisional" candidates when they commence the course of study. This is changed to "confirmed" status following the official confirmation of candidature process which involves an oral presentation of the research proposal to a

Confirmation of Candidature Panel. Confirmation of candidature will take place within six to 12 months full time equivalent (FTE) for HDR candidates (longer with special permission from the Graduate Research School) after the commencement of the research component.

## 4.2. Confirmation of Candidature

- 4.2.1. The purpose of this milestone is to ensure that the candidate:
- can coherently explain the research;
  - is making appropriate progress;
  - receives formative advice about the direction, scope, planning, methodology and feasibility of the project;
  - has sufficient training and professional skills;
  - has resources available to complete the course within the recommended timeframes;
  - has the appropriate advisory team composition; and
  - understands the pathway forward.
- 4.2.2. The principal supervisor must ensure that all compliance requirements (e.g. induction, relevant training, etc.) have been undertaken prior to the confirmation milestone. Application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) should take place after confirmation of the proposal. Until ethical clearance is obtained, there should be no form of contact with research participants, including recruitment and any data collection from human research subjects. Refer to the Research Ethics Policy.
- 4.2.3. The Confirmation of Candidature Panel will usually include:
- Panel Chair — Graduate Research School Director or delegated representative;
  - at least two other research active faculty members from a relevant field of research;
  - an external expert in the field nominated by the principal supervisor, if required. The external expert provides a written review and if possible attends the oral presentation.
- 4.2.4. The panel must not include any of the candidate's supervisors. The supervisor(s) should attend the oral presentation and can provide comment. However, the supervisor(s) are not included in the final decision of the panel.
- 4.2.5. Success at the confirmation of candidature demonstrates the candidate is likely to produce an assessable thesis in a timely manner.

## 4.3. Internal Transfer

- 4.3.1. An MPhil candidate seeking to transfer to the PhD or DMin will need to:
- receive a distinction average for two 20 credit point coursework subjects;
  - be recommended to transfer by their principal supervisor;
  - be approved to transfer by the Graduate Research School Director.
- 4.3.2. The Confirmation of Candidature Panel may also recommend that the candidate be upgraded to a doctoral award. The availability of internal transfer will be subject to the availability of places in the course. If applying for the DMin, the candidate must also meet the professional experience criteria.
- 4.3.3. In the case of International Students (temporary entrants), their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) for their original course will be cancelled and a new CoE will be issued by an International Student Officer once the student has returned a signed copy of the new offer letter and made any outstanding payments.

## 4.4. External Transfer

- 4.4.1. The relevant Program Director is authorised to permit an applicant who has completed a period of HDR candidature in another higher education institution to count the whole or any part of the period of this enrolment, as a period completed in a HDR course at the same level as at AC, provided that the:

- a. period of advanced study and research has been carried out under supervision in accordance with required ethics legislation;
- b. research is directly related to the candidate's proposed program at AC;
- c. candidate shall have formally withdrawn from enrolment in the HDR course of the other institution for which the previous tenure is applicable, except in the case of jointly awarded degree approved candidates.

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## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1. **Confirmation of Candidature Panel:** The Confirmation of Candidature Panel is responsible for assessing a HDR student's status to determine whether a student's status can be changed from "provisional" to "confirmed".
- 5.2. **Director of Graduate Research:** The Director of Graduate Research is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, assessing applicants' research capabilities and eligibility to undertake HDR courses at AC, and assessing internal transfer requests in accordance with this policy.
- 5.3. **Graduate Research School:** The Graduate Research School is responsible for confirming supervisor(s) in accordance with the Research Supervision Policy; assessing student applications, such as extension of candidature, leave of absence requests, funding and/or other support requests; and reviewing student progress and issuing, where necessary, notifications of at risk for termination of candidatures.
- 5.4. **Supervisors:** Supervisors are responsible for providing guidance, support, and mentorship to students undertaking research-based degrees.

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## 6. Procedures

### 6.1. Internal Transfers

- 6.1.1. Please refer to the AC Higher Degree Research Admissions Policy for information on the internal transfer process.

### 6.2. Confirmation of Candidature

- 6.2.1. The Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel will appoint members of the Panel. A Confirmation of Candidature Proposal is to be submitted by the candidate with the approval of the principal supervisor to Graduate Research School, at least six weeks before the Confirmation of Candidature to verify that it is prepared in accord with the HDR Confirmation Proposal Guide.
- 6.2.2. Once verified, the proposal is sent to the Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel to distribute to the Panel members at least ten working days before the Panel convenes.
- 6.2.3. An oral presentation is to be delivered by the candidate to a Confirmation of Candidature Panel which is an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate a contribution to advancing knowledge in the field, justify methodological processes, and provide a summary of progress to date.
- 6.2.4. The Confirmation of Candidature Panel may decide:
  - a. the proposal is accepted, with only minor edits required;
  - b. the proposal requires major edits, with an extension of the due date (of three months FTE) for achieving candidature if the assessors deem the proposal to be developed appropriately but not yet ready for confirmation of candidature;
  - c. the proposal is not accepted and presentation at a second panel is required. After two attempts the candidate will be liable for termination of candidature. The Panel may also suggest the candidate transfer to another course.

6.2.5. The Chair of the Confirmation of Candidature Panel will notify the Graduate Research School of the outcome, including written feedback for the supervisor(s) and candidate.

### **6.3. Extension of Candidature**

6.3.1. An HDR candidate is considered out of time if the FTE of the candidature period is completed without submitting a thesis for examination. If a candidate has not yet submitted a thesis for examination, he or she needs to formally apply for an extension of candidature with the permission of the supervisor.

6.3.2. The application for extension of candidature must specify the reasons for the request, and the plan for completion. Requests for extension of candidature are reviewed for approval by the Graduate Research School, and may be granted for a specified period.

6.3.3. International Students must refer to the AC International Student Policy for information on extension requirements.

### **6.4. Leave of Absence**

6.4.1. Domestic HDR candidates may apply for a total of 12 months FTE leave of absence, in total, based on medical or extreme extenuating circumstances. The application for leave of absence is to be submitted in writing to the Graduate Research School, with a recommendation from the supervisor.

6.4.2. In addition to these Leave of Absence entitlements, candidates may also request up to two semesters of parental leave per child.

6.4.3. International students: AC is required to report students' Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) on PRISMS for students who have taken leave from their studies. Please refer to the AC Leave of Absence Policy for more information.

### **6.5. Appeals**

6.5.1. For appeals, candidates should follow the Complaint and Grievance Resolution Policy.

### **6.6. Intervention**

6.6.1. Candidates whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory at an annual review will be issued a notification of at risk for termination of candidature by the Graduate Research School and advised to follow an intervention strategy which could involve:

- a. review of supervisory arrangement by the Graduate Research School;
- b. review of candidate's circumstances;
- c. referral to pastoral counselling if necessary;
- d. referral to English language and/or study skills training if necessary.

6.6.2. The candidate and principal supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate Research School Director, are required to devise a plan for improving the candidate's progress, with tangible goals to be accomplished within a three-month (FTE) period.

### **6.7. Research Funding**

6.7.1. AC provides research funding and support for HDR candidates in several ways, including:

- a. general research and writing software licensing (e.g. Office 365, Zotero);
- b. other software and licensing needed to conduct interviews and analysing data (e.g. Zoom, NVivo);
- c. an additional library membership for any research library;
- d. research methods training support;
- e. professional development seminars;
- f. academic conference funding;
- g. academic writing support (e.g. Grammarly Premium, Studiosity).

6.7.2. In some cases AC may also provide support for candidates whose thesis requires professional editing. Requests for funding or other support should be made to the Graduate Research School.

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## 7. Responsible for Implementation

7.1. Director of Graduate Research.

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## 8. Related AC Policies or Documents, Standards and Legislation

### 8.1. AC Policies or Documents

8.1.1. Higher Degree Research Admissions Policy;

8.1.2. Research Supervision Policy;

8.1.3. Research Ethics Policy;

8.1.4. International Student Policy;

8.1.5. Leave of Absence Policy;

8.1.6. Complaint and Grievance Resolution Policy;

8.1.7. Exclusion from a Course or Subject Policy.

### 8.2. Relevant Standards and Legislation

8.2.1. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021;

8.2.2. Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research;

8.2.3. Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act);

8.2.4. National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018).

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## 9. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed by the Director of Graduate Research on a regular basis in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Policy. Any proposed changes will be tabled at the Graduate Research School for endorsement and Academic Board for approval. Revisions will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders upon approval.

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## 10. History of Approval and Amendments

<b>Policy owner</b>	Director of Graduate Research
<b>Policy category</b>	Academic: Research
<b>Policy status</b>	Approved
<b>Approval Body</b>	Academic Board
<b>Endorsement Body</b>	Graduate Research School
<b>Approval Date</b>	2025.08.11
<b>Last Review Date</b>	2025.07.01
<b>History of Policy Amendments</b>	
V1 2022.12.20	Original policy approved.
V2 2025.08.11	Major revision; updated candidature status, confirmation process, and intervention procedures.

*Add a new row for each version of the policy. Do not remove previous changes.*

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## **Appendices**

N/A.