

Code of good practice: research degrees management and supervision

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Foreword

The University of South Australia (UniSA) is an Australian leader in innovative research conducted in partnership with industry and the professions. Research degree students, as research trainees, contribute to the University's research culture and research outcomes.

Integral to a quality research education experience is the provision of effective research management and supervision. Postgraduate Research Degree Supervisors (supervisors) play a central role in guiding research degree students in their research project, ensuring they meet milestones and complete their degrees on time. Responsibility for research degree students' progress is shared across the University and this code outlines the respective responsibilities of those involved in the management and administration of research degrees at all levels.

Definitions

Academic Regulations refers to the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research

Advisor

A member of a supervisory panel who is not an academic supervisor, and who has been chosen for the role due to their position as an end-user of research in the discipline, and/or their position in a relevant industry, and/or their capacity to provide expertise relevant to the student's research. Advisors may be either external to the University, or a member of staff or an adjunct.

Divisional Research Management Committee (DRMC) means the Research or Research Degrees Management Committee established by the Division.

Dean: Research

The management and responsibility for Research Education and related activities, including supervisor eligibility, differs between divisions. The term Dean: Research used here refers to the Dean or Associate Dean holding responsibility for research education, as determined within the management structure of the Division.

Principal Supervisor

A University academic staff member (including Adjunct) who has prime responsibility for guiding the postgraduate research undertaken by a designated HDR student and for overseeing the progress of that student towards completion of their research degree. Normally, a Principal Supervisor works in the Division where the student is enrolled.

Research Education Portfolio Leaders (REPLs) includes Research Degrees Coordinators, Associate Heads of School: Research and Program Directors: Professional Doctorate (Research) and their equivalents.

Supervisory Panel means the team responsible for providing supervision to a research degree student. The panel must include a minimum of two UniSA supervisors, one of whom will be the principal supervisor. Supervisory panels can also include experts from other disciplines and end-user advisors external to the University, as appropriate for the research degree student's discipline and project.

1. The University

The University has established the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), a sub-committee of Academic Board, which has the delegated authority in matters relating to research education and training. [View the [Terms of Reference](#).]

The University aims to foster and preserve the scholarly values of curiosity, experimentation, critical appraisal and integrity and to foster these values in its research degree students. All research degree students and supervisors are required to comply with:

- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Australian Code)
- [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (National Statement)
- [Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes](#)
- [Gene Technology Act and Regulations](#)
- [Defence Trade Controls Act](#)

in addition to University policies and procedures related to Responsible Practice in Research. [See Clauses 13 and 14 of the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research and Appendix B attached to the Regulations.]

2. Responsibilities of Research Degrees Committee and the Dean of Graduate Studies

Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and the Dean of Graduate Studies are responsible for establishing a policy and quality assurance framework for research degrees management and supervision¹. The management of research degree programs, including academic regulations of these programs, are generally devolved to Division level.

The quality assurance framework will ensure that:

- 2.1 requirements and entry standards for the research degree are clearly specified and are set to ensure that enrolling research degree students are likely to have the capacity to succeed, given their own commitment to complete;
- 2.2 rights and responsibilities of research degree students, the University, Divisions, Institutes, Schools and their staff are clearly documented and readily available to research degree students, including policy and academic regulations governing the degree, progress reporting and, where appropriate, scholarship conditions;
- 2.3 appropriate training in relation to responsible conduct of research is made available to all research degree students;
- 2.4 standards exist for qualifications, training and support of academic staff who supervise research degree students, and that a process exists by which assistance may be sought should it be required;
- 2.5 research degree students have access to adequate support, facilities and resources for conducting their research education, including [Research Education Support Activities \(RESA\)](#);
- 2.6 the status of intellectual property and commercial considerations arising from research degree students' research are defined and available to research degree students;
- 2.7 procedures are in place by which either the research degree student or the supervisor may raise and seek resolution of grievances or appeals;
- 2.8 there are explicit procedures for the examination process, including clear guidelines for examiners and other parties, outlining institutional expectations for the particular degree and any requirements for confidentiality;
- 2.9 completion times are monitored;
- 2.10 RDC is responsible for approving recommendations from Divisional Research Management Committees regarding candidature, making decisions on each research degree student's completion of requirements for the award of a research degree and for recommending to Council that research degrees be awarded.

3. Responsibilities of Deans Research

Each Division has a Research Management Committee, the Chair of which is the Dean, Research. Each Divisional Research Management Committee (DRMC) is responsible for monitoring and ensuring the effective conduct of research education management within the area and for ensuring that the area adheres to relevant policies, regulations and codes. Responsibility for research degrees may be delegated to the Dean, Research who normally chairs the DRMC. The Dean, Research is required to complete authorisations at various points of candidature in accordance with the academic regulations, but may delegate responsibility for day-to-day administration and management of research degree students to an Associate Dean: Research Education.

Through the DRMC, the Dean, Research will:

- 3.1 Actively participate in the development and implementation of strategic initiatives of the University within the relevant division, and dissemination of information about such initiatives.

- 3.2 make decisions and recommendations on matters pertaining to postgraduate research including research degree student admissions, scholarships, research proposal assessments, performance reviews, variations to candidature and examinations;
- 3.3 work with the Research Education Portfolio Leaders to oversee matters related to the supervision of research degree students;
- 3.4 monitor and report on research degree student progress within the Division;
- 3.5 report on corporate planning targets and quality assurance mechanisms within the Division;
- 3.6 determine whether University staff members meet the eligibility criteria to supervise at the relevant level, in accordance with Research Policy [RES 18 Higher Degree by Research Supervision](#);
- 3.7 ensure each supervisory panel includes, a principal and at least one co-supervisor and also ensure that all academic supervisors are sufficiently expert in the area of research in order to provide the research degree student quality supervision;
- 3.8 make every endeavour to locate another supervisor in the event that alternative supervisory arrangements are required, in consultation with the student;
- 3.9 provide a research rich education environment by contributing towards the development and delivery of [Research Education Support Activities \(RESA\)](#); to foster the development of Research Degree Graduate Qualities and productive intellectual, professional and ethical relationships between University staff and research degree students and external members of a student's supervisory panel and among research degree students;
- 3.10 address grievances or appeals involving Research Education Portfolio Leaders, supervisors and research degree students in accordance with University policy and regulations.

4. Responsibilities of Institute Directors and Heads of Schools

The Institute Director and Head of School are responsible for:

- 4.1 appointing an academic University staff member with established and recognised experience in supervision to act as Research Education Portfolio Leader who will represent the area as a member of the Divisional Research Management Committee (DRMC);
- 4.2 ensuring that adequate resources and development opportunities are provided to assist Research Education Portfolio Leaders (REPLs) and supervisors in the performance of their duties;
- 4.3 ensuring REPLs provide research degree students with relevant information upon commencement of candidature, including:
 - 4.3.1 policy/ guidelines governing ethics and integrity, compliance, intellectual property, authorship, research misconduct and copyright;
 - 4.3.2 support, facilities and resources available to research degree students within the University; and
 - 4.3.3 appeal, at risk and grievance procedures;

4.4 negotiating supervisor workload at commencement of candidature such as to provide the research degree student with appropriate and adequate supervision throughout candidature, and renegotiating as required. Such workload is to be distributed between the principal/co-supervisor and associate supervisor(s) of the supervisory panel;

4.5 ensuring each research degree student has resources available according to the [Statement of minimum resources for research degree students](#) and providing project-specific funds for the research degree student to conduct the research project in accordance with the approved research proposal;

4.6 in conjunction with the Dean, Research, undertaking to ensure that supervision will be available in the area of the student's research for the normal duration of the degree;

4.7 in conjunction with the REPL, and in consultation with the student, appointing a substitute principal supervisor where a supervisor is absent for six weeks or more;

4.8 ensuring that a local area work health and safety & injury management (WHS & IM) system that is aligned with the University's WHS & IM Plan is in place for each research degree student to follow.

5. Responsibilities of Research Education Portfolio Leaders

The Research Education Portfolio Leader (REPL) is responsible to the Head of School for the oversight of all matters related to the supervision of research degree students. The REPL reports higher degree research activities to the Division's Dean: Research.

The REPL is responsible for:

5.1 Administering higher degrees by research in the school

As a member of the Division's Research Management Committee, Research Education Portfolio Leaders:

- Assess applications for research degree student places and scholarships in conjunction with the Head of School and Dean, Research, taking into account available facilities and resources as per the [Statement of minimum resources for higher degree by research students](#);
- In conjunction with the Head of School, coordinate transparent processes for the allocation of supervisory panel members (internal supervisors, external associates and/or end user representatives) according to the Academic Regulations and School guidelines/procedures;
- Coordinate the submission of research proposals to the review panel and to the Divisional Research Management Committee;
- Coordinate and monitor planning, review and report of progress and undertake at least two documented planning and review sessions each year with each student and their principal supervisor;
- Monitor for issues and/or conflicts between research degree students and supervisors and initiate strategies to reduce the impact of these issues on student progress;
- Act as mediator to facilitate the resolution of conflict between research degree students and supervisors;
- In the event of unsatisfactory student progress, consult with the research degree student, supervisor(s), and Dean, Research to determine the most appropriate course of action, as per the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research;
- In the event of suspected research misconduct by a student, facilitate the inquiry process as required (see [Appendix B to the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research](#));

- Authorise variations to candidature;
- Monitor the selection of examiners and the outcomes of examinations and where required, assist supervisors to develop recommendations for the Examinations and HDR Academic Quality Panel.

5.2 Helping to build a research rich education environment

- Participate in the implementation of strategic initiatives of the University within their school, and the dissemination of information about such initiatives.
- ensure research degree students are provided with relevant information upon commencement of candidature:
 - policy/ guidelines governing ethics and integrity, compliance, intellectual property, authorship, research misconduct and copyright;
 - support, facilities and resources available to research degree students within the University; and
 - appeal, at risk and grievance procedures;
- In conjunction with supervisors, direct research degree students towards research education resources, including [Research Education Support Activities](#) (RESA) and other relevant external and internal research training opportunities;
- Facilitate the development of appropriate seminar opportunities at the local level and encourage participation of research degree students and supervisors;
- Assist supervisors to gain access to relevant policies, procedures and guidelines governing research education and research degree supervision, the area's procedures, and information about the University's supervisor development program.

5.3 Contributing to quality assurance

- Monitor the quality and viability of the research education environment in accordance with the University's policies, including [Quality Assurance and Improvements in Higher Degrees by Research](#), the Code of Good Practice: Research Degrees Management and Supervision, and the '[Statement of minimum resources for research degree students](#)'.

6. Responsibilities of research degree supervisors

Supervisory panels are the preferred model of supervision for research degree students at UniSA. Principal supervisors are responsible for establishing supervisory responsibilities and reporting processes for the panel. Within a supervisory panel, responsibilities should be established and agreed to as soon as practicable in the development of the research degree student's research proposal.

All supervisors are expected to supervise their research degree students in accordance with the responsibilities below, to foster research integrity and maximise the opportunities for timely and successful completions by:

- 6.1** being familiar with, abiding by and guiding research degree students in relation to the University's policies, procedures, regulations, guidelines and codes relevant to higher degrees by research, including intellectual property, ethics and compliance, integrity, authorship arrangements, copyright and research misconduct and [Research Degree Graduate Qualities](#);

6.2 remaining aware of current supervisory practices and the policy environment by participating in supervisor development and awareness programs provided by the University, as per [Research Policy RES18 Higher Degree by Research Supervision](#);

6.3 establishing with the commencing research degree student and review as necessary the mutual expectations and obligations outlined in the [Research Induction Plan and Statement of Agreement](#);

6.4 providing the resources for their research degree students to undertake their proposed research program in their School;

6.5 communicating/meeting regularly with their research degree student in order to provide timely advice and guidance in all matters related to research conduct and overseeing all stages of the research process, including identifying the research objectives and approach, obtaining ethics and other approvals, conducting the research and reporting the research outcomes in appropriate fora and media;

6.6 maintaining a level of communication with the research degree student, the principal supervisor and other panel members (including advisors) to ensure adequate supervision;

6.7 satisfying themselves that the research methods and outcomes of research degree students under their supervision are appropriate and valid;

6.8 ensuring that, prior to data collection, ethics and compliance approvals for the research program as necessary have been obtained, and that the research degree student adopts ethical and safe working practices in places of study and work and complies with work health and safety and injury management guidelines;

6.9 during candidature supervisors are expected to:

- refer the research degree student to appropriate resources and assist with preparation of the research proposal;
- monitor the research degree student's writing style to help avoid plagiarism and to ensure appropriate presentation of written material; and
- comment critically and constructively, and in reasonable time, on the content of drafts of the thesis;

6.10 providing academic support and guidance, and helping research degree students to create strategic academic networks by putting them in contact with relevant researchers and other research degree students in their discipline;

6.11 completing the bi-annual progress review and reporting requirements of the University and advising the research degree student on preparation for and performance in these reviews and reports;

6.12 monitoring the research degree student's performance and ensuring the research degree student is promptly made aware of inadequate progress or insufficient work by providing detailed feedback that identifies problems, establishing agreed timelines and milestones by which to measure performance, and conducting additional reviews of progress as required;

6.13 encouraging and supporting research degree students to publish and present their work where appropriate;

6.14 ensuring that research degree students receive appropriate recognition and credit for their research;

6.15 contributing to examination procedures by:

- certifying that the thesis is of a standard appropriate to the discipline, is properly presented and adequately expressed in English, conforms to University regulations and policies and is, therefore, *prima facie*, worthy of examination. The research degree student should be consulted on the choice of examiners but the final decision lies with the supervisor;
- advising the research degree student on how to deal constructively and appropriately with critical review, including examiners' comments and recommendations;
- recommending to the Dean, Research an appropriate response to the examiners' recommendations, including a proposed resolution of conflicting examiners' reports to the Examinations and HDR Quality Panel, where necessary;
- reviewing amendments to the thesis and when required certify that the requisite amendments have been made within the required timeframe;

6.16 encouraging and supporting research degree students' career aspirations and planning; and helping them to develop the personal and professional capabilities that will enhance their career options.

7. Responsibilities of advisors

7.1 Advisors are appointed to supervisory panels on a voluntary basis and their participation will vary depending upon the research project being undertaken. Advisors are responsible for providing industry and end-user expertise to a research degree student's research project. Depending on the student's research project, end-users can be drawn from a wide range of industries, including but not limited to private enterprise, federal, state or local government and the not for profit sector.

7.2 It is expected that advisors will be involved in the co-creation of student research projects; to actively mentor the research degree student and to provide them with end-user linked exposure and experience, as appropriate. Depending on the needs of the student and the specific research project being undertaken, advisors may:

- Provide feedback on the student's research proposal;
- Maintain an appropriate level of communication with the research degree student and/or the supervisory panel and participate in regular meetings as necessary;
- Mentor the research degree student throughout candidature;
- Facilitate end-user linked experiences such as invitations to board meetings, placement opportunities or other exposure;
- Encourage and support the student's career aspirations and help them to develop the personal and professional capabilities that will enhance their career options; and
- Review and provide feedback on drafts of the student's thesis.

8. Responsibilities of research degree students

The responsibilities of research degree students are as follows:

8.1 Conducting research

- In aspiration of becoming a professional researcher, research degree students are expected to: obtain ethics and safety approvals for the research program as necessary (prior to data collection), adopt

ethical and safe working practices in all places of study and work and comply with work health and safety and injury management guidelines;

- Participate in the intellectual community provided by their Division and undertake appropriate Research Education Support Activities (RESA);
- Play an informed part in planning a research project in order to complete the thesis and degree within the allocated time of scholarship and/or funded candidature;
- Maintain the progress of work according to milestones agreed with their supervisors;
- Participate in planning and reviewing progress, and monitoring achievement of [Research Degree Graduate Qualities in partnership](#) with their supervisors and the research education portfolio leader (REPL);
- Disseminate and publish their results on an ongoing basis during their candidacy;
- Cite the work of other authors fully and accurately when disseminating research findings;
- Comply with any confidentiality requirements of sponsors; and
- Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties and share responsibility for seeking appropriate solutions.

8.2 Managing candidature

- At commencement of candidature, research degree students should establish with supervisors the mutual expectations and obligations outlined in the [Research Induction Plan and Statement of Agreement](#), including supervision style and the development of [Research Degree Graduate Qualities](#);
- Take an active part in maintaining an appropriate schedule of meetings with their supervisory panel;
- Undertake training in research ethics, work health and safety, environmental protection, as well as technical matters appropriate to their discipline;
- Have a completed and approved [research proposal](#) within a maximum period of 12 months post commencement in order to confirm their candidacy and continue their enrolment;
- Submit the necessary documentation (including Review of Progress documents confirming satisfactory progress against agreed milestones) to enable Graduate Research to update their enrolment.

8.3 Examination

- Research degree students must prepare the thesis for examination and submit with the necessary documentation according to appropriate guidelines and regulations;
- Participate in discussions relating to the appointment of examiners and, while not having a right to nominate or veto the choice, raise any concerns or objections about potential examiners;
- After examination, promptly make required corrections to the thesis within the allocated time and ensure enrolment is active in the case of major amendments; and
- Participate in an oral defence of the thesis².

8.4 Research integrity

Compliance with:

- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (Australian Code)
- [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#) (National Statement)
- [Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes](#)

- [Gene Technology Act and Regulations](#)
- [Defence Trade Controls Act](#)
- University policies and procedures related to Responsible Practice in Research. [see Clauses 14 and 14 of the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research and Appendix B attached to the Regulations.]

8.5 Professionalism

- abiding by the [Policies, regulations and codes of good practice](#) and with other policies and procedures including UniSA's [intellectual property](#), data storage and management, [copyright](#), [research misconduct](#) and [authorship](#) policies;
- regularly checking to ensure biographical, demographics and email details are up-to-date in myUniSA, checking email on a regular basis, conforming with University administrative requirements such as payment of all fees by the due dates and complying with enrolment dates; and
- providing feedback to UniSA on the research degree student experience.

¹ See [Policy Res 15.1 Quality Assurance and Improvement in Higher Degrees by Research](#)

² Compulsory for PhD students commencing on or after 1 January 2016. Optional for students who commenced prior to this date.