



Research Degrees Student Progression

Context and Purpose

The purpose of performance reviews and development throughout the research degree is to assist research degree students to progress through their award, ensure students have access to appropriate resources, provide structured reflection and feedback from the Supervisory Panel and students, and ensure the University's duty of care to students is met.

This procedure outlines the processes for monitoring and managing the progress of research degree students throughout their research degree, including the Confirmation of Candidature Review in the first year, and six-monthly Reviews of Progress throughout the duration of the degree.

The procedure must be read in conjunction with the Policy AB-58: [Research Degrees](#) and its Definitions.

Responsibility

Research degree students, supervisors, and staff associated with the support, coordination and leadership of research degree programs are responsible for understanding and complying with the policy and this procedure alongside the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the University's Research Integrity and Research Misconduct policies and procedures.

Student and Academic Services are responsible for maintaining the student record. Decisions and outcomes made in accordance with this procedure must be documented and a copy provided to Student and Academic Services to be retained on the student record.

All other procedural responsibilities are detailed in this procedure.

Confidentiality

Refer to [M-1 Privacy Policy](#).

Procedure

A. Confirmation of Candidature

1. Unless an extension to the timing of Confirmation of Candidature has been specified in the letter of offer:
 - a. Master of Research students have up to three (3) months full-time study to submit for approval a comprehensive Research Proposal to the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate).
 - b. PhD students have up to six (6) months full-time study to submit for approval a comprehensive Research Proposal to the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate).
 - c. Professional Doctorate by Research students are required to have their Research Proposal developed and approved before they are enrolled in the research component of the degree.
 - d. For research degree students undertaking a PhD by Portfolio of Publications, candidature commences from the date of initial enrolment.

2. A research degree student who is not able to submit their Research Proposal for approval in the timeframe stated in clause A.1. must apply for an extension to the relevant Research Degree Coordinator at least one (1) month prior to the due date of their research proposal. Any application for extension must be justified and include a supporting statement from the Principal Supervisor and be agreed to by the Dean of Research (or delegate). Normally, an extension will be granted for a maximum of three (3) months.
3. A research degree student who transfers between research degree programs must have their Confirmation of Candidature approved by the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate), and must satisfy the Confirmation of Enrolment requirements for the new research degree in accordance with Procedure AB-58 P5: [Research Degrees Program Transfer](#).
4. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will establish a Confirmation of Candidature Review Panel (the Panel) to review each research degree student's Research Proposal and ensure that all Confirmation of Candidature requirements are met.
5. Each research degree student must present and defend their Research Proposal to the Panel and include the Statement of Agreement. The Panel may meet with the student and members of their Supervisory Panel in-person or by videoconference.
6. The Panel will advise the Dean of Research (or delegate) that:
 - a. the Research Proposal should be accepted and that the Statement of Agreement is appropriate for supporting the research project and timelines; or
 - b. the research degree student should be required to undertake amendments for the proposal and/or the Statement of Agreement to be accepted; or
 - c. the Research Proposal and/or Statement of Agreement should not be approved, and the research degree student should be transferred to another program, where the student has had a reasonable opportunity to improve the proposal and does not meet requirements, but would be able to progress in an alternative program; or
 - d. Research Proposal and/or Statement of Agreement should not be approved, and the research degree student should be suspended (refer to clause 25), where the student has had a reasonable opportunity to improve the proposal and still does not meet requirements.
7. On the advice of the Panel Chair, the Dean of Research (or delegate) will formally advise the research degree student of the outcome of the Panel meeting. The Panel Chair will provide written feedback from the Panel to the student and the Dean of Research (or delegate); when suspension is advised, refer to clause 23.b.
8. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will notify Student and Academic Services of the outcome of the Panel meeting for inclusion on the student record.

B. Reviews of Progress

9. A research degree student must make satisfactory progress in the research project and any required coursework to remain in the research program. The purpose of Reviews of Progress is to:
 - a. assist students to progress through their award;
 - b. provide support to students with their progression;
 - c. allow for intervention where students are not progressing according to plan;
 - d. meet legislative and University requirements;
 - e. ensure students have access to appropriate resources; and
 - f. ensure the University's duty of care to students is met.

10. Each research degree student, Principal Supervisor (or co-supervisors) and Research Degree Coordinator is required to undertake at least two (2) documented planning and review sessions each year (no more than six (6) months apart), recorded as a Review of Progress, accessed via the student and staff research portals. For Professional Doctorate by Research students, this occurs in the research component of the program only.
11. Research degree students will prepare and submit the Review of Progress via the student portal, drawing from the Statement of Agreement and reflecting on development of skills and abilities, completion of milestones including research activities, internships, coursework and capability development consistent with their career aspirations, and the particular field of their research. Progress against expectations and interaction with members of the Supervisory Panel and broader research community will be documented for discussion.
12. The Research Degree Coordinator will oversee research degree student progress, to understand and support progress, and take action as required. The Research Degree Coordinator will meet with a student at minimum once a year face to face to understand progress, and where possible convene Review of Progress meeting with the student and Supervisory Panel to discuss progress since the last review, planning for the next six (6) months and any concerns raised by the student or any members of the Supervisory Panel. Reviews and forward planning should include consideration of recreation or other leave by the student and/or supervisors.
13. Goals and objectives will be reviewed and modified in subsequent planning and Review of Progress meetings between the research degree student and Supervisory Panel.
14. The Statement of Agreement shall inform the Review of Progress and, along with the research degree student's progress plan, any decisions relating to applications for:
 - a. extensions to scholarships and fee-relief;
 - b. variations to enrolment;
 - c. overtime; and
 - d. extension to Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE).
15. A record of the Review of Progress is retained on the research degree student's record. The following outcomes are recorded, as appropriate:
 - a. Satisfactory: the student is meeting the requirements of the Statement of Agreement and previous Reviews of Progress, and therefore academic progress is deemed to be satisfactory;
 - b. Satisfactory with concerns: concerns were raised but have been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned and documented;
 - c. Conceded satisfactory: the enrolment is to be subject to the student meeting specified research milestones and timelines agreed with the Supervisory Panel, and may be subject to additional Reviews of Progress;
 - d. Unsatisfactory: unsatisfactory progress (defined in clause C) will be managed in accordance with clause D.
16. Where a research degree student fails to participate in the Reviews of Progress, and an exemption to participation is not in place, they may be administratively withdrawn (refer to clause H). Exemptions to participation in Reviews of Progress are limited to exceptional circumstances, on compassionate or medical grounds.

17. Where there are concerns about the progress of a research degree student, the student is informed in writing of the requirements necessary to make satisfactory progress. The student may be required to undertake additional Reviews of Progress. A copy of the requirements and intervention strategy (refer to clause D.21) is provided to Student and Academic Services and retained on the student record.
18. In the event that a problem which is impeding progress is not resolved through the Review of Progress, the research degree student has the right to submit a case to the Dean of Research (or delegate) for investigation.

C. Unsatisfactory progress

19. Unsatisfactory progress is defined to be where the research degree student:
 - a. has failed to provide a Research Proposal within the required time;
 - b. has not successfully met the requirements of their Confirmation of Candidature as a result of their Research Proposal being deemed not acceptable on academic grounds;
 - c. has failed to obtain the appropriate ethics and safety clearances for the conduct of the research;
 - d. has failed to meet agreed timelines and milestones;
 - e. is absent without approved leave for more than six (6) months or, in the case of international student visa holders, is absent without approved leave for any period;
 - f. has failed to submit their research for examination within the prescribed time;
 - g. has failed to otherwise comply with the Statutes, Policy, Procedures, Codes or Guidelines of the University.

D. Managing unsatisfactory progress

20. If the research degree student's progress is considered unsatisfactory (clause C) the student is notified in writing by their Principal Supervisor and Research Degree Coordinator outlining the reasons that have been identified. The notification includes an intervention strategy designed to improve the student's performance in their research program. A copy of the correspondence and intervention strategy is provided to the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate) and retained on the student record.
21. Possible intervention strategies may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. counselling;
 - b. training (e.g. [EDGE](#) activities such as mental health and wellbeing, ethics and/or technical practices);
 - c. a recommended course of action comprising revised timelines and milestones;
 - d. a reduction in load (refer to AB-58 P1: Research Degrees Admission and Enrolment, clause F);
 - e. a reduction in working hours;
 - f. approved leave of absence.
22. If the research degree student continues to make unsatisfactory progress, the Supervisory Panel and Research Degree Coordinator review the student's progress, taking into account the intervention strategies and activities undertaken by the student.

23. The Research Degree Coordinator advises the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate) that:
- a. the research degree student be allowed to continue, subject to the conditions to be imposed. The Research Degree Coordinator also informs the student in writing of the conditions and the timelines, as well as the possible outcomes should the conditions not be met. A copy of the correspondence must be provided to the Dean of Research (or delegate) and retained on the student record; or
 - b. the research degree student's candidature is to be suspended. The Dean of Research (or delegate) notifies the student, in writing, of the following:
 - i. The reasons for the suspension as shown in clause C.
 - ii. The process for appealing the suspension (refer to clause F).
 - iii. Their enrolment in the program will be discontinued as a result of the suspension.
 - iv. For international research degree students on a student visa, the suspension of their candidature constitutes a breach of their student visa conditions, and the University is required by law to notify the Australian Government if the student is suspended/terminated. This results in cancellation of their CoE and may affect their student visa. If the student accesses the internal appeals process, the University is obliged to maintain the student's CoE while the appeal is ongoing.
 - v. Their scholarship will be suspended as an outcome of their candidature suspension (refer to Procedure AB-59 P1: [Research Degrees and Research Training Program \(RTP\) Scholarships](#)).
24. A copy of the notification letter is provided to Student and Academic Services to be retained on the student record.

E. Suspension of Candidature

25. Where the Dean of Research (or delegate) makes the decision to suspend a research degree student's candidature (refer to clause A.6 and D.23) due to unsatisfactory progress, the Dean of Research (or delegate) advises the Research Degrees Committee of the University that the student's enrolment will be suspended.
26. The research degree student has 20 working days to appeal to the Dean of Graduate Studies the decision to suspend their candidature.
27. If the research degree student does not appeal the decision within 20 working days of the date of the suspension letter, the student's enrolment is cancelled and the student is notified by Student and Academic Services.
28. A research degree student whose enrolment is suspended has a notation marked on their transcript in accordance with Procedure AB 68 P6: Final Grades and Notations.
29. Where the research degree student appeals the suspension, the Dean of Graduate Studies conducts a Formal Review of Academic Progress.

F. Formal Review of Academic Progress

30. Upon receiving an appeal against suspension from the research degree student, the Dean of Graduate Studies establishes a Formal Review of Academic Progress Panel (Panel) consisting of:
- a. the Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair);
 - b. three (3) Deans of Research (or delegates) who are members of the University's Register of Current Research Degrees Supervisors. The Dean of Research (or delegate) of the Academic Unit in which the student is enrolled is ineligible to serve as a member;

- c. a nominee of the Registrar and Director, Student and Academic Services;
- d. a representative from [USASA](#).
- e. University academic staff members with disciplinary expertise relevant to the case may be co-opted, as required.

The Panel proceeds even if all members are not in attendance, provided there is a quorum of four (4) which must include the Chair.

31. The Dean of Graduate Studies writes to the research degree student notifying them of the Formal Review of Academic Progress. The letter from the Dean of Graduate Studies contains, at a minimum:
 - a. the reasons the student's progress has become the subject of a review;
 - b. the membership of the Panel appointed under clause F.30;
 - c. the timing and location of the Panel's meeting, and options for videoconferencing;
 - d. information on the procedures for Formal Review of Academic Progress; and
 - e. the student's right to present a case at the Panel meeting, either in person, via agreed electronic medium, or by production of documentation, as to why the student should be allowed to continue with the degree.
32. The research degree student is invited to attend the meeting to present their case and may be assisted or represented at the meeting by:
 - a. a representative of [USASA](#); or
 - b. any staff member or student of the University.

This person is not a member of the Panel.
33. The Dean of Graduate Studies invites the Dean of Research (or delegate), supervisor(s) and Research Degree Coordinator to present their case for suspension of candidature. The Dean of Research (or delegate), supervisor(s) and Research Degree Coordinator may not be members of the Panel.
34. The Panel considers the research degree student's academic progress and whether there are grounds for suspension of enrolment.
35. The Panel meeting proceeds on the scheduled date. If the research degree student has not responded to the letter referred to in clause F.31, the University must demonstrate that it has made all reasonable attempts to contact the student about the Panel meeting.
36. The Panel may decide to:
 - a. allow the research degree student to continue, subject to such conditions it wishes to impose; or
 - b. suspend the research degree student.
37. Within 10 working days of the Panel meeting, the Dean of Graduate Studies:
 - a. advises the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate);
 - b. notifies the research degree student, in writing, of the Panel's decision; and
 - c. provides Student and Academic Services with a copy of the relevant correspondence to the research degree student for inclusion in the student record.

38. Where the Panel decides that the research degree student is to be suspended, the student is notified in writing that:
 - a. they have the right to appeal the decision of the Panel to the Student Appeals Committee within 20 working days of the date on the letter, and the grounds that they may appeal on (refer to clause 42);
 - b. their enrolment in the program will be discontinued if the student does not appeal, or the appeal does not meet the grounds for appeal to the Student Appeals Committee;
 - c. for international students on a student visa: the suspension/termination of their candidature constitutes a breach of their student visa, and that the University is required by law to notify the Australian Government they are suspended. This results in cancellation of their CoE and may affect their student visa.
39. A research degree student in bad financial standing will not be able to obtain a transcript until all outstanding fees and charges are paid in accordance with Policy A-47: [Student Fees and Loans](#).
40. If the research degree student does not appeal the decision within 20 working days of the date of the letter from the Panel, the student's enrolment will be cancelled by Student and Academic Services and the student and relevant Dean of Research (or delegate) notified.
41. A research degree student whose enrolment is suspended has a notation marked on his/her transcript in accordance with Procedure AB 68 P6: [Final Grades and Notations](#).

G. Lodging an appeal on the outcome of a Formal Review of Academic Progress

42. Research degree students are entitled to lodge an appeal against the outcome of a Formal Review of Academic Progress to the Student Appeals Committee in accordance with the [Student Appeals Committee Procedure](#), using the relevant appeals form [online](#).

H. Administrative withdrawal

43. Where a research degree student has failed to participate in a Review of Progress, maintain enrolment (except where the student is on approved leave of absence), has failed to maintain contact with the supervisor for more than six (6) months, or does not voluntarily withdraw from their program due to lack of supervision (refer to Procedure AB-58 P2: Research Degree Supervision, clause 2.f) the student may be administratively withdrawn from the degree.
44. The Dean of Research (or delegate) advises the research degree student that they are at risk of being administratively withdrawn if they do not complete a Review of Progress, maintain enrolment, contact the supervisor within a reasonable timeframe or withdraw from the program.
45. The University will make reasonable attempts to contact the research degree student, and records of attempts to contact the student must be retained. If the student is unable to be contacted or does not respond to requirements set by the Dean of Research (or delegate) within 20 working days, they are administratively withdrawn.
46. A research degree student who is administratively withdrawn may appeal to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be reinstated within 20 working days. Students are entitled to lodge an appeal with the Dean of Graduate Studies where policy and/or procedural requirements were not met.
47. A research degree student who is administratively withdrawn will have a notation marked on the transcript in accordance with Procedure AB 68 P6: Final Grades and Notations.
48. A research degree student who is an international student visa holder will have their CoE cancelled, which may affect their student visa.

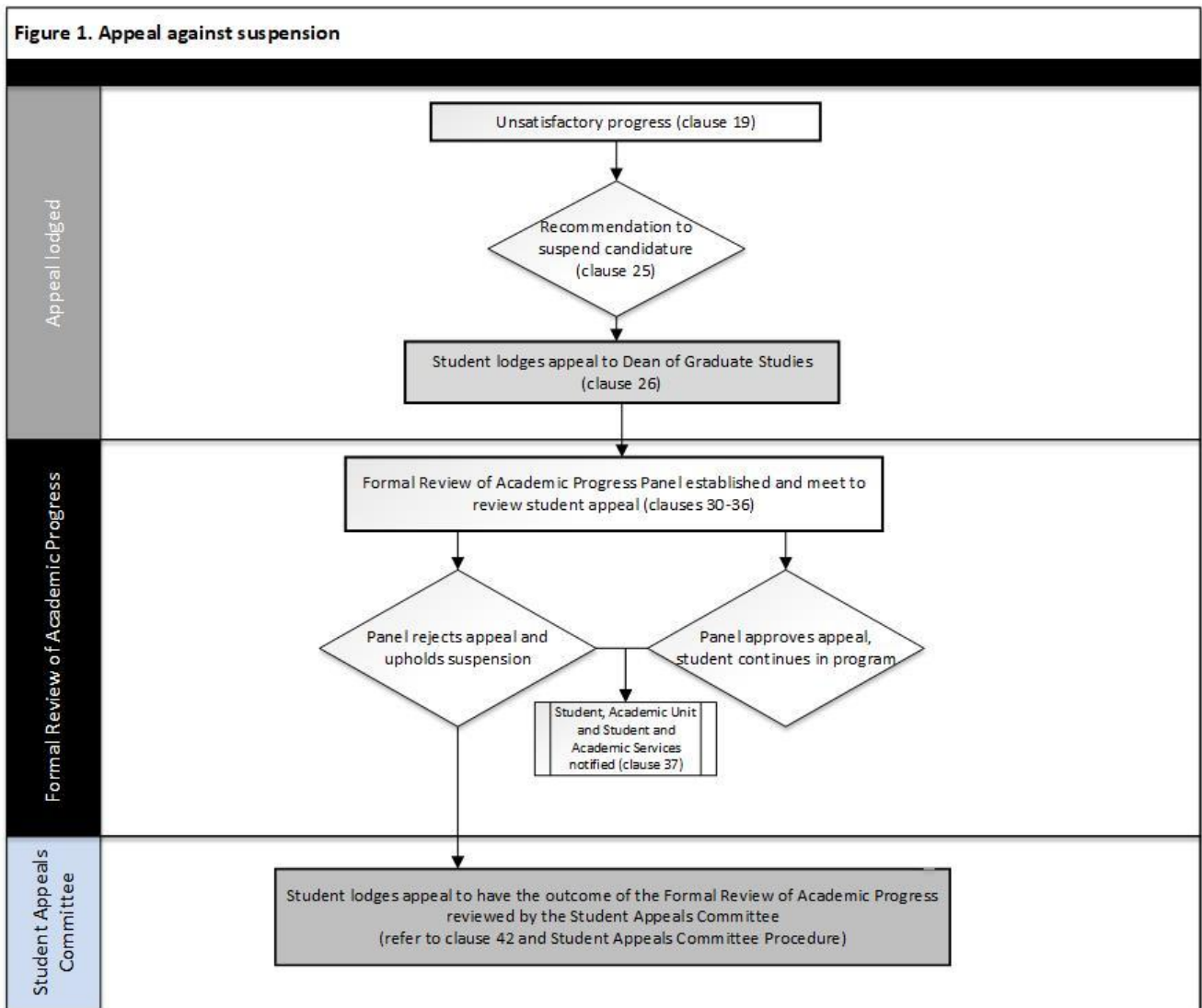
I. Withdrawal from candidature

49. A research degree student who wishes to withdraw should discuss their plans for withdrawal with their Principal Supervisor, their Supervisory Panel, and/or their Research Degree Coordinator. If, following discussion, the student still wishes to withdraw, they should submit the appropriate form to the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate).
50. Where an international student visa holder withdraws from their program, their CoE will be cancelled which may affect their student visa.
51. Access to University systems and scholarship payments cease upon withdrawal from candidature.

J. Reinstatement/Re-admission

52. A research degree student who has withdrawn or whose enrolment was suspended or administratively withdrawn may apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies for reinstatement, provided they have had less than three (3) years' absence from date of withdrawal to continue their previous research project.
53. The application for reinstatement must be in writing and include the reason why the research degree student should be reinstated. The Principal Supervisor must support an application for it to be considered further, with approval by the relevant Dean of Research (or delegate).
54. The Principal Supervisor of a reinstated research degree student is required to establish milestones and study plan with the student to ensure completion within the required timeframe. The Dean of Research (or delegate) is required to agree to these milestones and to monitor progress against milestones.
55. Reinstatement will only be allowed once.
56. A research degree student who is reinstated is liable for tuition fees if they have exceeded the maximum time allocated to complete the research degree program.
57. Any previous debt owed to the University must be cleared before reinstatement occurs (refer to Policy A-47: [Student Fees and Loans](#)).
58. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will advise the research degree student in writing if an application is not supported.

Figure 1. Appeal against suspension



Definitions

Academic Unit is a major organisational unit with responsibility for academic programs. At UniSA, there are seven Academic Units: UniSA: Allied Health & Human Performance; UniSA: Business; UniSA: Clinical & Health Sciences; UniSA: Creative; UniSA: Education Futures; UniSA: Justice & Society; and UniSA: STEM.

Confirmation of Candidature is a structured review of the initial progress of a research degree student’s research activity, including the Statement of Agreement and Research Proposal, that confirms the period of provisional enrolment has been successfully completed. Following Confirmation of Candidature, the research degree student will continue in their program on an ongoing basis for the remainder of the research degree.

Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) is a form issued by the University to international students studying in Australia on a student visa, for student visa purposes.

Confirmation of Candidature Review Panel is the Panel convened by the Research Degree Coordinator to evaluate the Statement of Agreement and Research Proposal to determine if the research degree student has reached the standard to move from provisional enrolment to continuing enrolment.

Dean of Research is the research leadership role in each Academic Unit who enacts the University’s research strategy and is responsible for the oversight of research degree programs in their Academic Unit. The Dean of Research may delegate the leadership and management of research education and related activities to a Professorial Lead with portfolio responsibility for the research degrees in the Academic Unit.

Enrolment is the process by which persons who have been admitted to a University program are formally registered to undertake one or more courses within their program as either commencing or continuing students.

Enterprise Agreement / Collective Agreement is the current University of South Australia Enterprise Agreement and the University of South Australia Senior Staff Collective Agreement.

Exceptional circumstances are unexpected and beyond the control of the student. These circumstances have a significant impact on the progress of the student's research project and/or the student's well-being. Exceptional circumstances may include: medical (serious illness or injury), family, personal, employment or program-related circumstances, and major political upheaval or natural disaster in an international students home country requiring emergency travel.

Form refers to all online and paper-based forms and applications.

Principal Supervisor is a university academic staff member or adjunct who has primary responsibility for guiding the postgraduate research undertaken by a designated research degree student and for overseeing the progress of that student towards completion of their research degree. The Principal Supervisor is normally responsible for decisions and processes as detailed in relevant procedures, including convening the Supervisory Panel for reviews of research degree student progress, and consultation on the research project.

Research Degrees Committee is a sub-committee of Research Leadership Committee and has delegated authority in matters relating to the research education and training strategy and the management and administration of research degrees. This includes responsibility for making decisions on each candidate's completion of all requirements for the award of a research degree and for recommending to the University Council that the degree be awarded.

Research Degree Coordinator is a member of academic staff, appointed by the Dean of Research in an Academic Unit, who has responsibility for pastoral care of research degree students. The Research Degree Coordinator convenes Confirmation and Reviews of Progress, and acts in accordance with Policy AB-58 Research Degrees and associated procedures.

Research degree student is an individual enrolled in a research degree.

Research Proposal is a 10-20 page statement prepared by a research degree student summarising the proposed research and research methodologies. An approved Research Proposal is required to satisfy the requirements of Confirmation of Candidature.

Scholarship (Research) is an award selected on merit to assist a research degree student to undertake or complete a program of research at the University, in accordance with the selection criteria. A scholarship may take the form of monetary payment or assistance with specified costs, including an offset (payment) for student fees, a stipend to support the student's living costs, or ancillary costs.

Staff member is an individual employed by the University under its Enterprise Agreement or Collective Agreement, and also includes adjuncts, visiting academics and guest lecturers, and volunteers, whether they are paid or unpaid.

Supervisors are members of the University Community who have oversight and/or direction of the work of staff or students.

Supervisory Panel is a team, usually comprising three (3) to five (5) members, who are responsible for providing supervision to a research degree student. The Panel must include a minimum of two (2) UniSA supervisors, one (1) of whom will be the Principal Supervisor. Supervisory Panels can also include experts from other disciplines and advisors, where appropriate for the research project.

Suspension may occur if the research degree student has not completed the requirements for the degree. Enrolment lapses prior to the completion process due to the research degree student failing to make satisfactory progress. Within three (3) years, the research degree student may seek reinstatement and be re-admitted if appropriate support is available.

Termination may be determined as an outcome of a Formal Inquiry into alleged research misconduct. No reinstatement is permitted.

University Community refers to all students and staff members of the University including honorary title holders, adjuncts, visiting academics, guest lecturers and volunteers who are contributing to the work of the University but who are not staff members.

Further Assistance:

[Student and Academic Services](#)

Related Documentation:

Policy AB-58: [Research Degrees](#)

Policy A-47: [Student Fees and Loans](#)

Policy C-17: [Student Complaints Resolution](#)

Policy RES-22: [Intellectual Property: Ownership and Management](#)

Procedure AB-58 P1: [Research Degrees Admission and Enrolment](#)

Procedure AB-58 P2: [Research Degrees Supervision](#)

Procedure AB-58 P4: [Research Degrees Leave](#)

Procedure AB-58 P5: [Research Degrees Program Transfer](#)

Procedure AB-58 P6: [Research Degrees Thesis Preparation and Examination](#)

Procedure AB-58 P7: [Research Degrees Student Research Misconduct](#)

Procedure AB-59 P1: [Research Degrees and Research Training Program \(RTP\) Scholarships](#)

Procedure AB-68 P6: [Final Grades and Notation](#)

[Guidelines on Electronic Communication with Students](#)

Guideline AB-58 AD4: [Preparation of Research Statements for the Degree for the Doctor of Philosophy \(by Portfolio of Publications\)](#)

Guideline AB-58 AD5: [Research Degrees Statement of Agreement](#)

Guideline AB-58 AD6: [Preparation of Research Proposals in Research Degrees](#)

[Student Appeals Committee Procedure](#)

[UniSAEDGE \(Enhancement of Doctoral Graduate Employability\)](#)

Officer Responsible for Update and Review: Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research and Enterprise

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Academic Board, 25 February 2022

Academic Board, 26 November 2022

Academic Board, 24 November 2023

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History: This procedure was previously referenced as clauses 8-10, 12,19 and 20 in the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research.