



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

# UOW HDR

# Student Lifecycle Review

**Findings Report**

**June 2016**

## Executive Summary

The Higher Degree Research (HDR) Student Lifecycle Review (the Review) was commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor in February 2016 to examine the policies, procedures and practice that constitute UOW's HDR student lifecycle<sup>1</sup>. The Terms of Reference for the Review are on page 4. The Review involved a desktop benchmarking exercise and consultation with staff and students to understand current practice and identify areas for improvement.

The Review was overseen by a five member Working Group with internal and external membership and was chaired by Professor Judy Raper, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

The Working Group found UOW's current policies, procedures and practices to be comparable to those of the benchmarked institutions. The Working Group noted that UOW's policy positions were deemed to be at least as stringent as, and in some cases more so, than the benchmarked universities. The Working Group noted that a number of HDR policies are currently under review for finalisation by the end of 2016 and emphasised the need for language being clear, consistent and expressed in plain English. The Working Group also emphasised that the revised policies need to remain consistent with the Higher Education Threshold Standards. While the Review did not uncover any significant policy gaps, it did highlight aspects of the student lifecycle that could be enhanced to deliver an improved student experience and greater support for staff.

Recommendations include:

- Streamlining of the admissions process to:
  - o Reduce application processing times;
  - o Provide students with a clear point of contact and regular progress updates during the application process;
- Additional information provided on UOW webpages for new commencing and future HDR students;
- Revisions to the orientation program for information to be delivered in multiple tranches and reduce information overload in students' first week;
- The introduction of compulsory professional development and an institutional good practice guide for supervisors to ensure a common understanding of research training responsibilities;
- Amendments to Annual Progress Review documentation to formalise co-supervision input and non-thesis work (i.e. presentations etc.); and
- As policies, procedures and guidelines are updated, being cognisant of the language being used to ensure they are clear, consistent and expressed in plain English.

In addition to the recommendations, the Working Group noted that the Graduate Research School has the opportunity to help transform higher degree research training particularly in light of the recommendations of the recent ACOLA Review of Research Training. In order to achieve this, the Working Group recommended examination of the level of resourcing provided to the Graduate Research School relative to other institutions. The Working Group recommends that a small internal working party be established to oversee the implementation of the supported initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix One for the Policy Review

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## Terms of Reference

### Scope

The Review examined the policies, procedures and practices that constitute the UOW HDR student lifecycle, including but not limited to:

- The recruitment and admittance of students to HDR programs;
- HDR supervision arrangements;
- Training and support for HDR supervisors;
- Research Proposal Review (Year 1) and Annual Progress Reports;
- HDR Completion Rates;
- Examinations, including the Thesis Examination Committee; and
- Conferral of Degree.

The Review covered processes for HDR student management across all faculties and disciplinary areas.<sup>2</sup>. Particular areas of enquiry included:

- Management of inter-disciplinary research and the multi-faculty governance arrangements in place to support this. Note. Interdisciplinary research is of particular strategic importance to UOW as demonstrated by the [Global Challenges Program](#) and institutional aspiration to be ranked in the top 1% of world universities (For further information refer to the [UOW 2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#)).
- HDR student governance arrangements between the Graduate Research School and faculties.

### Working Group Membership

Prof Judy Raper (Chair)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Prof Timothy Marchant	Dean of Research
Prof David Steel	School of Mathematics and Applied Statistics
Prof Gordon Waitt	School of Geography and Sustainable Communities
Prof Kate Wright	Dean of the Graduate Research School, University of Western Australia

### Executive Support

Ms Kath McCollim	Director, Business Improvement and Assurance
Ms Kate Grove	Senior Manager, Business Improvement and Assurance

Information and support was also provided by RAID.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: An HDR Student for the purposes of this review is defined as a student who is enrolled in a PhD, a professional doctorate, or a Masters by Research Thesis.

## **Review Methodology**

### **Desktop Review**

A desktop review was carried out to benchmark UOW's HDR policies, procedures and guidelines with:

- The University of Newcastle (Newcastle);
- Deakin University (Deakin);
- Macquarie University (Macquarie); and
- The University of Tasmania (UTAS).

This group of institutions was selected for benchmarking as they are the comprehensive universities most similar to UOW in size and structure with respect to Higher Degree Research. UTAS and Deakin also previously partnered with UOW for the 2012 *'Improving the Research Training Environment'* benchmarking study.

The purpose of the desktop review was to identify gaps and/or variances between the institutions across the major phases of the student lifecycle. The desktop review enabled comparison of policy positions in key areas such as admission, supervision and examination. The summary was presented to the Working Group, and the findings informed discussion for two senior staff focus group sessions.

In reviewing the information provided as part of the desktop review, the Working Group also took into consideration the ['Review of Australia's Research Training System'](#) produced by the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) in March 2016; the [Higher Education Threshold Standards](#) and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

### **Staff and Student Consultation**

Staff: Feedback was sought from all staff using an online survey. The survey was open for two weeks and 132 responses were received. Responses were reviewed by the Working Group and informed a subsequent set of questions for two senior staff focus groups. Throughout the process, staff were directed to the Review's Intranet page for further information and encouraged to contact the Project Manager with any queries <https://intranet.uow.edu.au/raid/hdr-review/index.html>.

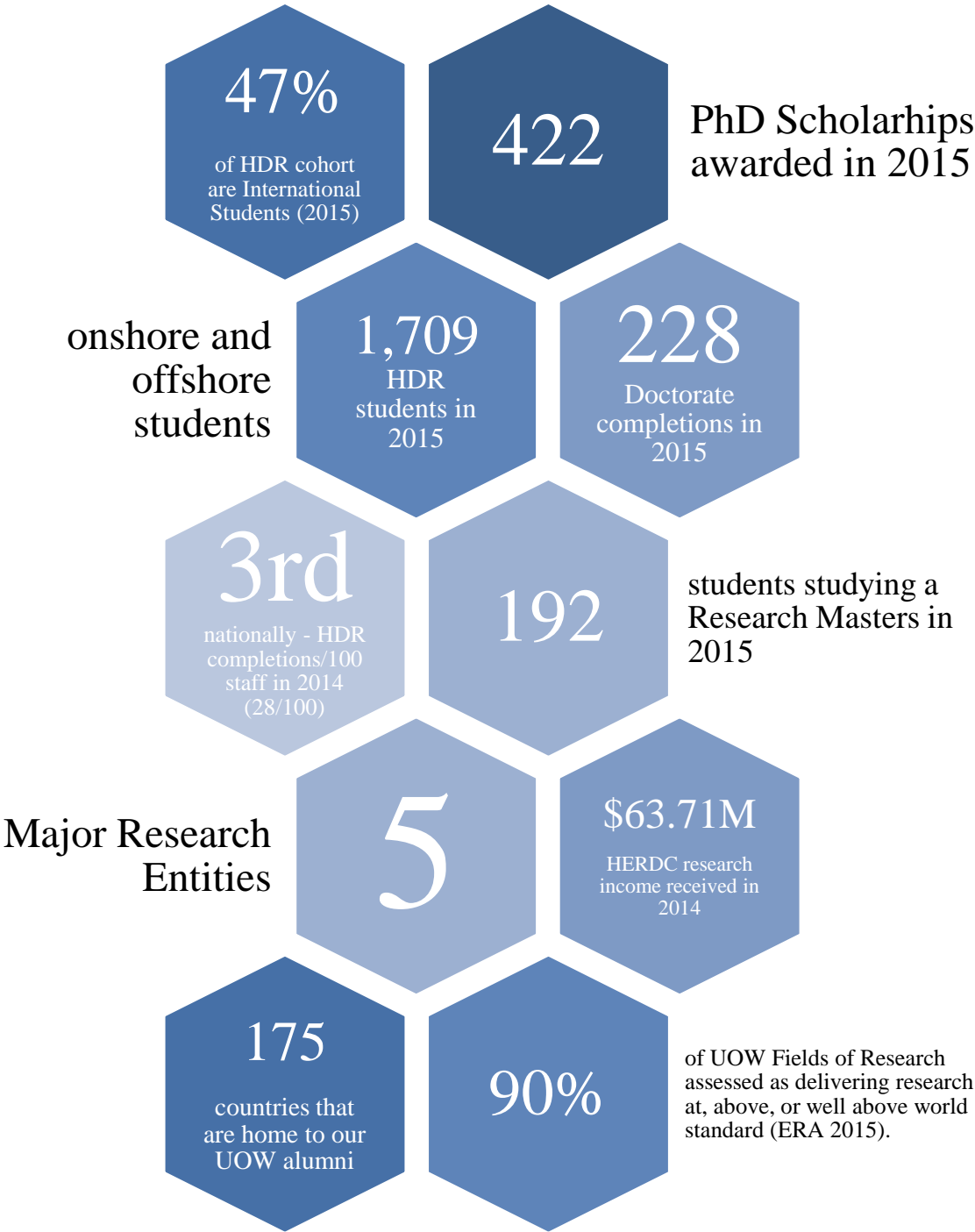
Students: Student focus groups were held with all five faculties and the Australian Institute of Innovative Materials (AIIM). In total, 56 students provided feedback to the Review. All focus groups included a mix of domestic and international students at varying stages of their HDR candidature.

### **Senior Staff Focus Groups**

Two senior staff focus groups were held as the final consultation phase of the Review. The focus groups had over twenty participants and included: Executive Deans, Associate Deans Research, Heads of Postgraduate Studies, HDR Research Coordinators and relevant senior academics. The two focus groups were facilitated by the executive support staff for the project and observed by members of the Working Group. The focus groups examined areas of interest that emerged from the staff and student consultation phases and desktop review, and tested early recommendations formed by the Working Group.

# UOW's HDR Student Profile

The following page provides a variety of high level statistics relevant to UOW's Higher Degree Research. Refer to Attachment 1 for more detailed data on UOW's HDR cohort.



## Desktop Review

The desktop review encompassed the policies, guidelines and rules that constitute the governance and management of the HDR Student Lifecycle. Particular focus was given to the following stages of the student lifecycle:

1. The admittance of students to HDR programs
  - a. Confirmation of enrolment
  - b. Orientation
  - c. Period of candidature
2. HDR supervision
  - a. Supervisor allocation
  - b. Supervisor training
  - c. Supervisor guidelines including roles and responsibilities
3. Measuring and monitoring student progress
  - a. Research Proposal Review
  - b. Annual Progress Reports
4. Examination
  - a. Thesis examination processes
  - b. Selection and appointment of examiners.

A list of relevant policies is provided below:

Policy Type	Document	Status
<b>UOW Code or Rule</b>	• Code of Practice – Research	Under Review
	• HDR Thesis by Compilation Rules	Not listed on the UOW Policy Directory
<b>UOW Policy</b>	• Higher Degree Research (HDR) Academic Complaints Policy	Current
	• Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervision and Resources Policy	Current
	• Joint Doctor of Philosophy Agreement Policy	Under Review
	• Higher Degree Research Scholarships Selection Policy	Under Review
	• Research Misconduct Policy	Under Review
	• Student Assignment of Intellectual Property Policy	Under Review
<b>UOW Procedure</b>	• Fees Policy (Includes tuition fees for overtime HDR students)	Current
	• Nil	
<b>UOW Guideline</b>	• HDR Study by Distance Learning Guidelines	Current
	• Joint Doctor of Philosophy Degree Guidelines	Under Review
<b>GRS Guideline</b>	• Course Transfer Guidelines	These guidelines are not listed on the UOW Policy Directory
	• Research Proposal Review Guidelines (LHA Faculty Only)	
	• HDR Progress Review Guidelines	
	• Guidelines for Preparation, Submission and Examination of HDR Theses	
	• Guidelines for Probation Supervisors	
	• Research Proposal Review (RPR) Guidelines	

Key findings regarding the above research policy documents are:

- The UOW-wide policy framework relevant to HDR students is compliant with TEQSA's higher education standards and with the ARC/NHMRC Code of Responsible Research;
- A number of guidelines are not on the UOW policy directory and are not clear as to the delegated approval pathway.
- Some documents currently labelled 'GRS Guidelines' might be better reframed as policies or procedures to ensure effective compliance.
- All research policies and guidelines need to be formally approved and regularly updated;
- Not all guidelines use language that is clear, consistent and expressed in plain English; and
- GRS guidelines were difficult to access and did not appear in a logical policy hierarchy.

The policy framework of each of the five Australian universities was examined (refer Attachment 2). The following observations were made which contributed to a number of key recommendations:

- UOW needs to make its policy framework more accessible and easier to navigate. UTAS and Deakin demonstrated strong practice in this area;
- UOW needs to review some of the language used to explain key steps in processes. UTAS and Deakin demonstrated strong practice in this area;
- UTAS maintains a register of supervisors – reviewed regularly and based on criteria;
- More so than the other institutions, UTAS focuses on support of the 'whole student'. Online resources and guidance about supporting candidates' mental health is readily accessible;
- Macquarie makes very clear, the confidential feedback channel that is available to students who may be experiencing issues that are affecting their progress but for which they do not wish to put in writing in their Annual Progress Report (APR);
- UOW, Deakin, Newcastle, and UTAS explicitly state that the nomination of examiners is ultimately the responsibility of the University, not the candidate. At UOW, the candidate and the supervisor generate a list of at least four examiners and the final choice from the list is made by the supervisor and recommended to the Faculty Head of Postgraduate Studies for final approval, in accordance with the Nominations of HDR Thesis Examiners Guidelines; and
- UOW's HDR Supervision and Resources Policy states that *'In some cases, e.g. where the topic is multidisciplinary a panel could be formed to advise the HDR candidate; however, one academic member, meeting the relevant criteria, must be appointed as Principal Supervisor. All other supervisory panel members will be listed as Co-supervisors or Associate supervisor as appropriate.'* Approaches to the supervision of cross-disciplinary theses were not spelt out in the policy documents of the other universities. This suggests that cross-disciplinary thesis supervision could potentially be a sector-wide issue.

The Desktop Policy Review is provided as Attachment 3.

Recent audits and projects carried out at UOW have identified a number of risks and issues in the current state of HDR admissions. Broader issues are currently being addressed under the Student Services Division – initiated Admissions Improvement Roadmap which seeks to review institutional admissions principles and decision-making to inform a customer-centred admissions experience and greater clarity and visibility of processes between the Student Services Division, faculties and the UOW College. Some key risks and issues are as below:

- Potential inconsistencies in HDR course assessment (lack of assessment guidelines); and
- Authenticity of supporting documentation (no formal back-to-source verification of documentation).



## Staff Feedback

Feedback was invited from all staff using an online survey (Survey Monkey). The survey was open from 4 – 15 April 2016 and staff were notified about the Review and survey via:

- An all UOW staff email on 4 April from the Chair of the Working Group encouraging all staff to provide feedback; and
- A reminder notification on 12 April in the all staff email bulletin ‘Universe’.

Staff were directed to the Review’s Intranet page for further information <https://intranet.uow.edu.au/raid/hdr-review/index.html>. One hundred and thirty two (132) responses were received, and staff provided comment on a broad cross section of issues pertinent to the HDR student lifecycle.

## Staff Feedback Themes

A summary of the response by theme is provided below:

### 1. Drawing on your professional knowledge, how do policies and procedures designed to regulate the admittance of students to HDR programs, play out in practice?

Themes	
Process Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time consuming and overwhelming process</li><li>• Lack of consistency between faculties</li><li>• Some students lost due to annual cycle</li><li>• Lack of knowledge of policy</li></ul>
Guidelines and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admission decision making seems to be arbitrary</li><li>• Guidelines and policies are difficult to follow and need to be streamlined</li></ul>
Student recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A consistent and uniform policy is required</li><li>• Should be based upon student achievements/marks</li><li>• A high level of English proficiency is required</li><li>• Losing students to other universities</li><li>• Focus should be quality over quantity</li></ul>

### 2. In your experience, is the process of supervisor allocation working? If not, how could it be improved?

Themes	
Supervisor allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supervisors are being allocated based on workload not expertise</li><li>• Finding suitable supervisors can be challenging</li><li>• There are a limited number of supervisors in some fields</li></ul>
Supervisor experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New supervisors need support from more experienced academics</li></ul>
Workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workload is often not shared equitably between joint supervisors</li><li>• Co-supervisor is vital</li><li>• Limit the number of students per supervisor</li></ul>

**3. The Graduate Research School (GRS) is dedicated to providing professional and efficient service to students and staff on all HDR candidature matters. What is your impression of the relationship between Schools and the GRS?**

<b>Themes</b>	
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many staff complimentary about service provided</li> <li>• A number of respondents unaware of GRS</li> </ul>
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under resourced</li> <li>• Staff attrition is a challenge</li> <li>• Restructure lead to instability</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor and school often not included in communication</li> <li>• Communication is directly with the student</li> <li>• Information flow could be improved</li> <li>• Limited information provided to schools and faculties</li> <li>• New processes need to be communicated more broadly</li> </ul>

**4. In your experience, what are the key ingredients of a good working relationship between supervisors and co-supervisors?**

<b>Themes</b>	
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing all communications with the student and from the student</li> <li>• Meeting regularly</li> <li>• Clear agreed roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Knowledge of the process</li> <li>• Clear objectives between student and between all supervisors</li> <li>• Timely advice</li> </ul>
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect, confidence</li> <li>• Integrity</li> </ul>
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging experience of both parties</li> <li>• Knowledge of subject matter</li> </ul>
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined and realistic thesis topic</li> <li>• Realistic timeframes</li> </ul>
Co-supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains communication with principal supervisor</li> <li>• Involvement in process</li> <li>• Mentored and supported by principal supervisor</li> </ul>

**5. What are your observations and experiences with UOW's policies, procedures and practices regarding the training and support of HDR supervisors?**

<b>Themes</b>	
Policies, procedure and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved recently</li> <li>• Subject matter experts need to be advertised</li> <li>• Difficult to navigate</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness</li> <li>• More training required</li> </ul>

**6. Do you think the policy and practices around confirmation of enrolment are robust?**

<b>Themes</b>	
Policies, procedure and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time consuming</li> <li>• Onerous at times</li> <li>• Change regularly making it difficult to keep up to date</li> <li>• Slippage between policy and practice</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness</li> <li>• More training required</li> </ul>
Entry requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English proficiency is a problem</li> <li>• Previous qualifications and subjects need verification</li> </ul>

**7. How effective are the mechanisms available to measure student progress after confirmation?**

**a. What aspects are working well**

- Annual Progress Review
- Research Proposal Review

**b. What is not working**

- Not enough monitoring throughout the course of the year
- Probation process
- Reporting of emerging problems

**c. What improvements can you suggest?**

- More frequent progress reporting and monitoring activities
- Create an 'interdisciplinary research' committee at level of GRS to deal with cross-faculties student evaluations
- More considered communication between parties (always cc relevant staff)
- Greater variety of opportunities for students to present their work on an ongoing basis to a range of audiences
- Mechanisms for identifying concerns when they arise and before they become a problem

**d. What is actually happening in your Faculty?**

- Variation of practice acknowledged across faculties and schools

**8. Do you think processes for encouraging students to complete their course in the specified timeframe are working? If not, what else could be done?**

<b>Themes</b>	
Timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PhD completion time frame not realistic</li> <li>• Greater flexibility required</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness of processes</li> </ul>
Entry requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrictive</li> <li>• English proficiency requirements should increase</li> </ul>
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workload is a challenge</li> <li>• Defining role clearly</li> <li>• Sharing lessons learnt and mentoring</li> </ul>

**9. What are your observations and experiences with UOW's policies, procedures and practices regarding the selection and appointment of examiners?**

Themes	
Policies, procedure and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slippage between policy and practice</li> <li>• Greater flexibility required – no two examiners/country rule</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness</li> <li>• More training required</li> </ul>
Examiners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider network required</li> <li>• Multidisciplinary examiners used for cross discipline topics</li> <li>• Two country rule needs greater flexibility</li> </ul>

**10. Answer only if applicable to you - Administration of inter-disciplinary HDR research generates unique procedural challenges. Do you think current UOW policies adequately address these?**

Themes	
Interdisciplinary opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More interdisciplinary projects required</li> <li>• Greater opportunities</li> <li>• Greater flexibility and clarity required</li> <li>• Clarity around processes</li> </ul>
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workload challenges</li> <li>• Defining role clearly is required</li> <li>• Loyalty to one faculty problematic</li> <li>• Allocation of publication not clear</li> </ul>

**11. In your view, which of the above 10 questions rank in the top 3 as most critical to the effective governance of the HDR Student Lifecycle?**

Answer Options	Percent	Count
1. How do policies and procedures designed to regulate the admittance of students to HDR programs play out in practice?	38.3%	41
2. Is the process of supervisor allocation working?	25.2%	27
3. What is your impression of the relationship between Schools and the Graduate Research School?	16.8%	18
4. What are the key ingredients of a good working relationship between supervisors and co-supervisors?	23.4%	25
5. What are your observations and experiences with UOW's policies, procedures and practices regarding the training and support of HDR supervisors?	42.1%	45
6. Do you think the policy and practices around confirmation of enrolment are robust?	19.6%	21
7. How effective are the mechanisms available to measure student progress?	60.7%	65
8. Do you think processes for encouraging students to complete their course in the specified timeframe are working?	32.7%	35
9. What are your observations and experiences with UOW's policies, procedures and practices regarding the selection and appointment of examiners?	20.6%	22
10. Administration of inter-disciplinary HDR research generates unique procedural challenges. Do you think current UOW policies adequately address these?	10.3%	11

**12. Provide any additional feedback that in your view is relevant to this review.**

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<b>Themes</b>	
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HDR is under resourced</li><li>• Administration is under resourced</li></ul>
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workload is high</li><li>• Defining role clearly is vital</li><li>• Loyalty to area problematic for interdisciplinary research</li></ul>

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## Student Feedback

Focus groups were held in all five faculties and the Australian Institute of Innovative Materials (AIIM)<sup>3</sup>. In total, fifty-six (56) students provided feedback to the Review. Fifty-three (53) students attended the focus groups. A further three responses were submitted via email from students unable to attend the session. All focus groups included a mix of domestic and international students at varying stages of their HDR candidature.

The focus group attendance rates were:

Faculty/Institute	Attendees
Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences	14
Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health	11
Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts	7 (plus 3 via email)
Faculty of Business	9
Faculty of Social Sciences	5
Australian Institute of Innovative materials	9

## Student Feedback Findings

### 1. In your experience, how do processes at UOW effectively or ineffectively admit students to HDR programs? (including the confirmation of enrolment process).

Responses varied across schools and between domestic and international students. Overall the online application process was considered to be satisfactory by most domestic students. Issues with the admissions process were predominately experienced by international students.

#### Themes

Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissatisfaction with the information and service provided by international agents. Students who went through international agencies experienced more problems than students who applied online.</li> <li>Dissatisfaction with the time required to process an application – over 4 months for some students.</li> <li>Students sought clearer explanation and guidelines on the admissions process. International students requested information such as a high level timeline.</li> <li>Clearer advice for students on the impact of commencement dates and how this aligns with UOW sessions.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students experienced difficulties in seeking progress updates on the status of their application.</li> <li>Students found there was a complicated communication pathway between SSD, the HDR Office and their Supervisor.</li> <li>International students reported having to repeat their application story each time they contacted UOW.</li> <li>There are time zone challenges for international students to contact relevant UOW staff.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> A copy of the Focus Group questions is provided at Attachment 4

## 2. Is the process of supervisor allocation working? If not, how could it be improved?

Students are largely satisfied with the process of supervisor allocation. The main concern was the suitability/relevance of some supervisor/student pairings, particularly where the student is studying in a different field to the supervisor.

### Themes

Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for greater transparency as to the rationale behind the allocation of supervisors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling that the process for adding a supervisor is not transparent.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students expressed concerns over the pairing of HDR students with primary and co-supervisors. These issues include students being allocated to supervisors when the student is not studying in the supervisor's field. Students felt that this allocation is based on the supervisor's need for students rather than a match between areas of study.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of students felt that their supervisors did not have the time for them and when talking amongst a group they felt that there was significant variability in the quality of supervisors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contemplating a request to change supervisors creates anxiety for some students; they are unsure of the best approach and do not want to offend their current supervisors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students perceived that there appears to be a resistance to cross-faculty supervision. Students felt that it would be valuable if there was more flexibility and encouragement for cross-faculty supervision.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students experienced difficulty sourcing a second supervisor. While students understood the process they do not believe that having multiple supervisors should be mandatory.</li> </ul>

## 3. The Graduate Research School is dedicated to providing professional and efficient service to students on all Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidature matters. What is your impression of the relationship between Faculties and the Graduate Research School?

A number of students were unaware of the Graduate Research School (GRS). For students who had previously accessed the GRS there were mixed responses as to their satisfaction with the quality of the service.

### Themes

Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater prominence required of the GRS and their role in HDR student facing events.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Across all focus groups many students did not know of the GRS or were not aware of its role.</li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students noted that the administrative processes associated with the student lifecycle were often difficult to find out about and then understand. While most HDR students can ask a supervisor their supervisor is sometimes not able to provide an answer.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flow chart would be helpful for knowing where to access certain information and general administrative processes associated with the student lifecycle.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater transparency around the application and allocation of scholarships is needed.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When some students experienced issues with their supervisor arrangements and presented this to the GRS, they were unsatisfied with the process and the outcome.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisors need training in where to direct student queries.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency is required in the messaging being delivered from the GRS to students.</li> </ul>
Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students had varied experiences when accessing the GRS. Some staff were</li> </ul>

	considered very helpful by the students while others found that they received different answers depending on who they spoke to and when.
<b>4. How successful are orientation, training and support processes for HDR students?</b>	
Students provided mixed feedback about the value of orientation. A number of students found the quantity of information overwhelming.	
<b>Themes</b>	
Perceived benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students felt that orientation had improved considerably over the past few years.</li> <li>• Orientation was not seen as valuable for students who had already studied at UOW.</li> <li>• Orientation is often difficult for international students to attend as their start dates are variable depending on visa arrangements – often students were not in the country when their orientation was scheduled.</li> <li>• Where International students were present for orientation they found it a very beneficial experience and valuable opportunity to network with their fellow students and become familiar with the campus.</li> <li>• Students who enrolled mid-session felt they received no or limited orientation.</li> </ul>
Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students noted that the USB they were provided with when they enrolled was of greater benefit as it had all the recourses they needed.</li> <li>• Students felt overwhelmed by the amount of information given during this time and expressed interest in staging the orientation process – i.e. information to be presented at 0, 3 and 6 months in the first year.</li> <li>• There is still a lot of basic general information that students felt they had to figure out on their own. This could be presented in an online help kit for students e.g. how to use the printers, how to become a tutor, etc.</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students reported that they had experienced minimal training and requested greater training on administrative procedures, for example, filling in risk assessments and placing orders for lab equipment.</li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-campus research camps were suggested; from past experience students have found these opportunities valuable.</li> <li>• One focus group suggested a pre-enrolment information session to inform students about the experience of studying a PhD. They reported feeling slightly mislead and unsure about what would be expected of them and that if they had, had the opportunity to hear from current PhD students they would have been better informed in making their decision to study a PhD.</li> <li>• Greater sell on the benefits of attending orientation</li> <li>• Orientation to have a greater focus on administrative processes and where to source information and the support services available to PhD students.</li> <li>• Stage orientation over the first six months. This may assist international students who arrive at varying times throughout the year and also prevent students feeling overwhelmed by receiving large volumes of information.</li> <li>• Obtaining certified copies of paperwork for training takes time and is expensive for international students. Processes should be streamlined so that this documentation is only requested once.</li> </ul>



**5. How helpful is the support provided to you by your supervisor? Are you aware of any level of support provided to your supervisor by UOW?**

Across all focus groups the quality of supervision varied significantly with about half of all students present reporting issues with their current or previous supervision arrangements. Supervisors not responding to emails or reviewing students work was the most frequently raised issue. A majority of students were not aware of the support available to them to make confidential complaints about their supervisors, nor were they aware of the support that supervisors have available to them at UOW.

**Themes**

Institutional training and support for supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A majority of students were not aware that any level of support was provided to their supervisor. This question often promoted discussion about the support that currently exists and also what support students would like their supervisors to be provided with.</li> <li>• The level of training provided to supervisors was identified as an issue.</li> <li>• Students felt that training for supervisors should be compulsory as this might improve the overall quality of supervision. Also the option for revision training every three years could be beneficial.</li> <li>• Greater consistency in the quality of supervisors and more transparency in the quality control standards for supervisors.</li> </ul>
English proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students identified that their supervisors' level of English had a significant impact on their ability to communicate with them.</li> </ul>
Supervisor workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students questioned whether there were any 'checks and balances for when a supervisor is working on a project and how supervisors select students'</li> <li>• Students felt their supervisors were overloaded and supporting too many students and that this was impacting the quality of support they were able to provide.</li> </ul>
Availability, responsiveness and support for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most frequently raised issue was supervisors not reading and responding to student emails. While students expressed an understanding of the workload pressures on their supervisors, this lack of communication proved challenging for students as their work was not being reviewed by supervisors in a timely manner if at all. One student reported that their supervisor had not reviewed any of their work until they were in their third year.</li> <li>• Students also reported difficulty in trying to schedule face-to-face meetings with their supervisors. Students noted that often their supervisor was out of the country or unavailable and that this was never communicated to the student.</li> <li>• Students reported that their supervisors did not seem interested in teaching them and that students were not valued unless they were able to provide value to their own research.</li> <li>• A minority of students reported having a very positive relationship with their supervisors. One student noted how helpful their supervisor was in helping them to relocate to Australia.</li> <li>• Where students experienced minimal or no support from supervisors they reported wanting to quit their PhD. However for one international student this was not an option because if they quit they would be forced to repay their loan from the government, something they were not financially in a position to do. As such the consequence for this student of quitting and returning to their country would be imprisonment.</li> <li>• Students were not aware of their supervisor's responsibilities towards them or that they had access to training.</li> </ul>
Relationship management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students found it difficult to approach their supervisor concerning issues of quality in supervision due to fear of the negative repercussions that such feedback might</li> </ul>

	<p>have on the outcome of their assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students felt that there was no means for them to provide feedback on their supervisors with the knowledge that this feedback would be kept confidential.</li> <li>• In many of the focus groups a power imbalance between student and supervisor was raised as an issue. One student, who was not present at the focus group, sent a friend to the focus group on their behalf. This student has experienced psychological issues as a result of the power imbalance in the supervisor-student relationship.</li> <li>• Students reported that dealing with their supervisors is the most problematic aspect of their PhD study.</li> <li>• Students were also not aware of any supported processes in place to assist students who are experiencing issues with their supervision arrangements.</li> <li>• Some students reported feeling bullied by supervisors to work faster and produce greater volumes of publications.</li> </ul>
Process knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To feel comfortable in accessing the support process for complaining about supervisors or reporting on issues students felt that they needed more training and awareness of the processes and procedures on accessing support and also the responsibilities that their supervisors have towards them. At the moment students felt as though they didn't know what the process is or the consequences of speaking out.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Are supervision arrangements working between supervisors and co-supervisors?</b></p> <p>Mixed responses were received to this question. There were no significant issues raised. However students felt that having more than two or three supervisors was excessive and challenging as all supervisors were never present at the same time.</p>	
<p><b>Themes</b></p>	
Strategic fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students felt that more thought needs to be given to the paring of students, primary supervisors and co-supervisors to ensure the best fit is achieved.</li> <li>• Some students felt that their supervisors worked well individually and they recognised how they assisted them in different ways.</li> </ul>
Relationship management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students noted that they had a good relationship with one supervisor but not with the other supervisor.</li> <li>• Students frequently experience difficulty in getting their primary and co-supervisors to meet with them at the same time. This creates challenges for students when their primary and co-supervisors deliver conflicting messaging.</li> <li>• A conflict of interest issue between supervisors who are working on similar projects was also raised as causing problems for the student who is then 'caught between supervisors'.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. How effective is the Research Proposal Review (RPR) process?</b></p> <p>Students felt that the RPR was a valuable process however it was not being used to its full potential. Students would benefit from more constructive feedback and greater involvement in discussions of their research proposal.</p>	
<p><b>Themes</b></p>	
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A majority of students felt that a more formalised process with tighter guidelines was needed. Students suggested that it should be similar to the APR with set questions to answer.</li> <li>• Students would like more constructive feedback from their supervisors.</li> <li>• The meeting to discuss the RPR would be useful for the student to sit in on as there is project discussion that would be helpful for the student rather than the current</li> </ul>

	<p>feedback received which consists of a few lines of summary that is given at the end 'Few problems identified but these have been resolved'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues of misrepresentation were also reported with one student initially told about all the equipment they would have access to. However when they got to UOW they did not have access to the promised equipment.</li> <li>• Students also reported issues of discrimination between Commonwealth funded students and International students. One student was forced to change their research proposal to suit the needs of the local community so that 'Australia and UOW' would benefit from their research rather than their initial proposal which benefited their home country. The student felt forced to change their proposal because if they had not changed it they were concerned that they would not have had access to certain equipment needed for experiments.</li> </ul>
Perceived Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students felt that the RPR is important for making sure the student knows what they are doing, however they do not feel that it is currently fulfilling this purpose.</li> </ul>
Culture and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The RPR creates anxiety for students. There was feedback that the process was a negative and belittling experience for students.</li> <li>• During one focus group, students noted that the judgement they received in their RPR was not fair and that different supervisors were setting different boundaries on what equipment they were able to access for experiments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. How effective are the mechanisms available to measure progress (e.g. Annual Progress Reports (APR))?</b></p> <p>An overwhelming majority of students do not have confidence in the APR. Students do not feel that this process is confidential and are not comfortable reporting issues with supervisors through this process.</p>	
<p><b>Themes</b></p>	
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants reported not having confidence to report honestly about the relationship with their supervisor.</li> <li>• Many students felt that they deliberately tempered their comments and were not comfortable giving negative feedback about their supervisor in this process.</li> <li>• Students identified the need for a more confidential process with an independent review panel.</li> </ul>
Perceived Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many students felt the APR was a box ticking exercise and did not perceive any value from the process.</li> <li>• It was also noted that the quality in feedback provided on the APRs varied significantly depending on the supervisor.</li> <li>• Students felt that the APR was a token measure of progress with content described as 'fluffy and unrealistic'. The fact that students don't feel they can report honestly about the supervisor relationship makes the APR an ineffective measure.</li> <li>• The record keeping benefits of the APR are critical and provide a valuable paper trail.</li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students were unsure of the appeal process where they are not satisfied with the outcome of the APR.</li> <li>• Students would like to see greater uniformity across faculties. The process differs between faculties and it is often difficult to get definitive guidelines on how to present information. This creates challenges for students who use their own peer networks for support.</li> </ul>

9. In your view, which of the above eight questions rank in the top three as most critical to the effective governance of the HDR Student Life-Cycle?	
	<p>The following ranked in the top three <b>across all focus groups</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 5: How helpful is the support provided to you by your supervisors/ Are you aware of any level of support provided to your supervisor by UOW?</li> <li>• Question 8: How effective are the mechanisms available to measure progress (eg. Annual Progress Reports)?</li> </ul> <p><b>Some</b> focus groups also ranked these questions in the top three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 1: In your experience, how do processes at UOW effectively or ineffectively admit students to HDR programs? (including the confirmation of enrolment process)</li> <li>• Question 3: The Graduate Research School is dedicated to providing professional and efficient service to students on all Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidature matters. What is your impression of the relationship between Faculties and the Graduate Research School?</li> <li>• Question 4: How successful are orientation, training and support processes for HDR students?</li> </ul>
10. Provide any additional feedback that in your view is relevant to this review.	
Themes	
Training and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students would like to see additional support being provided to students who are running behind time in their projects as this has a significant impact on mental health which they felt could be alleviated by greater support.</li> <li>• Students agreed that they would like more training and workshops in using and understanding some of the software they have available to them. Currently the students have to train themselves.</li> <li>• It would be useful if there was more communication around how to apply for funding/scholarships or where to get alternative sources.</li> <li>• Students reported a lot of negative messaging within their school about what happens when you finish your PhD and what careers are available. Students would value practical advice on what to do after your PhD. For example, career assistance and advice on how you should you pitch your research for the purposes of your CV.</li> </ul>
Physical location/facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For HDR students located on the innovation campus the experience is isolating and less support is available. There are also no meeting rooms or spaces for private meetings.</li> <li>• Students would value a collective space for all HDR students.</li> </ul>
Domestic/International student divides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students raised the issue that they were not getting paid the same amount as other PhD students, yet they were expected to produce the same amount of work. This participant had to work multiple jobs to 'live in Australia'.</li> <li>• Discrimination between Australian and International students was raised as an issue. Students felt that Commonwealth supported students have access to more funding and resources and this does not exist for International students. International students also have to do a lot more research themselves and an example was raised where a domestic students was paid more for data collection where the international student was not getting paid. The issue of segregation in the SRC (Sustainability Research Centre) was also identified – all domestic students sit on one side of the building and all international students sit on the other side. While this might not have been set up deliberately it is still sending the wrong message and appears discriminatory to the students.</li> </ul>

## Review Findings

1. The Working Group found UOW's current framework, policies, procedures and guidelines to be comparable to those of the benchmarked institutions. It noted that UOW's policy positions were deemed to be at least as stringent as, and in some cases more so, than the benchmarked universities.
2. The Working Group noted that a number of HDR policies are currently under review for finalisation by the end of 2016 and emphasised the need for language being clear, consistent and expressed in plain English. The Working Group also emphasised that the revised policies need to remain consistent with the Higher Education Threshold Standards.
3. While there is demonstrated evidence of institutional support of interdisciplinary research, there are no explicit institutional guidelines and procedures on the management of interdisciplinary research. This is similar to other institutions benchmarked in this review.
4. Students considered the mechanisms available to measure progress and the support provided by their supervisors to be the most critical factors in the effective governance of the HDR student lifecycle.
5. The Working Group noted that the Heads of Postgraduate Studies (HPSs) play a crucial role at all stages of the student's candidature – admission, first year review, Annual Progress Review and examination.
6. Continued professional development of HPSs and supervisors was deemed vital to adequately support and equip them with the knowledge to effectively support students across the lifecycle of their candidature<sup>4</sup>.
7. The Graduate Research School (GRS) was found to be providing a quality, valued service to staff and students. However, it was recognised that work is required to further improve awareness and visibility of the GRS to both staff and students. It was noted that the GRS has the opportunity to transform the HDR experience in accordance with the recent ACOLA review of research training. The Working Group recommends that further investigation be undertaken to benchmark the resourcing of the GRS relative to other institutions, particularly in regard to research training activities. Note: This information was not publicly available and requires forensic examination to draw accurate parallels and determine best practice.
8. The consultation process affirmed that many schools provide a supportive, high quality HDR experience; and the culture cultivated by academics at a school level, plays a significant role in creating a positive and dynamic collegiate experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Heads of Postgraduate Studies (HPS) oversee management of the HDR candidature of Higher Degree Research (HDR) students within UOW academic units. There is one HPS appointed for each School.

## Recommendations

The Working Group acknowledges that recommendations with resource implications will be subject to a budgetary costing process. The Working Group also supports the establishment of a small, internal Working Party to oversee implementation of the recommendations.

### Admission

1. Update the HDR future student website pages to provide direct links to relevant policies, procedures and guidelines.
  - a. Provide additional information on the admissions process for prospective international students on how to apply for admission without having to go through an agent.
2. Clarify the role and responsibilities of the Future Students Team; communicate these roles to faculties; and clarify who to direct student application progress status queries to.
3. Streamline the admissions process to reduce the time taken from an application being lodged by a student to an offer being made by UOW. The Working Group agreed that this process should not, in all but exceptional circumstances, take longer than 6 weeks.
  - a. Reconsider the requirement for co-supervisor sign-off prior to an offer being made. Note, this may require the introduction of a variable model whereby, in faculties where it is appropriate to do so, the co-supervisor can be formalised during the first meeting between the principal supervisor and student.
  - b. Provide future students with fortnightly updates (at a minimum) on the status of their application while it is being processed.

### Orientation

4. Orientation was highly valued by students, but the volume of information was found to be overwhelming. In light of this, consider opportunities to expand student orientation so that information is delivered in multiple tranches; and in multiple formats to reduce the information overload that is experienced in a student's first week.
5. Develop additional FAQs and process guidelines for the Future Students and GRS websites.
6. Commission an 'unofficial UOW HDR student guide' written by students, for students. The guide would be intended to provide information about the things that students rely on their peer group for advice on, and help those students who may not yet have a peer network at the commencement of their studies.

### Student Progress

7. Develop an institutional best practice guide on the Research Proposal Review process; taking reference from those areas of the University that already have in place effective, supportive approaches.
8. Annual Progress Reports:
  - a. Include a declaration on the Annual Progress Report (APR) for the primary supervisor to complete which reads – *'The contents of this Review has been discussed with the co-supervisor/s'*. Provide an area on the APR for co-supervisor comment. Note, the comment field would not be mandatory, but at the discretion of each co-supervisor.
  - b. Emphasise the reporting scope of the APR to ensure that anything additional to a student's research (i.e all presentations etc.) is included.

- c. Develop a communication campaign to inform students of the confidential feedback channels available to them during the APR and throughout their candidature.
- d. Ensure that all students are provided with regular opportunities to present on their work in front of peers.

### **Supervision**

9. Develop an institutional best practice guide for supervisors.
10. Introduce a cap on the maximum number of students assigned to a primary supervisor (EFTSL and head count) with loads applied appropriate to the different stages of the staff member's academic career.
  - a. Encourage experienced primary supervisors to take on more co-supervisory roles to allow early career researchers more supervision opportunities.
11. Improve professional development support for supervisors and Heads of Postgraduate Studies and introduce a compulsory annual training requirement for all supervisors. Supervisors would be required to attend one professional development activity (minimum 2 hours) each year, such as an:
  - a. Online workshop;
  - b. Internal peer to peer workshop discussing vignettes and near misses;
  - c. Internally delivered course run through PODS; or an
  - d. Externally delivered training course.
12. Establish a supervisor register with:
  - a. Evidence of up to date supervisor training;
  - b. Information on specialisations and research interests; and
  - c. Current research students.

### **General**

13. All research policies need to be regularly updated and approved in accordance with the relevant delegated authority. As policies, procedures and guidelines are updated, be cognisant of the language being used to ensure they are clear, consistent and expressed in plain English.
  - a. Amend the wording around oral examinations/vivas, so they are not perceived as a measure of last resort. e.g. *'an oral examination can be required by the examiner or the University'*.
14. Review Research guidelines and assess whether they should be classed as guidelines, procedures or policies.
15. A detailed research policy review will be completed by December 2016 and will include professional and technical input from the Governance and Legal Division and the Academic Quality and Standards Division.

## Attachments

1. Data Summary
2. Policy Framework
3. Desktop Policy Review
4. Student Focus Group Questions

## Acronyms

ACOLA	Australian Council of Learned Academies
AIIM	Australian Institute of Innovative Materials
APR	Annual Progress Report
ARC	Australian Research Council
EFTSL	Equivalent full-time student load
ERA	Excellence in Research Australia
GRS	Graduate Research School
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HERDC	Higher Education Research Data Collection
LHA	Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
PODS	Professional Development Unit
RAID	Research and Innovation Division
RPR	Research Proposal Review
SSD	Student Services Division
SMAH	Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency
UOW	University of Wollongong
USB	Universal Serial Bus
UTAS	University of Tasmania





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Attachment 1

# HDR STUDENT LIFECYCLE REVIEW

## DATA SUMMARY

April 2016  
Business Improvement and Assurance Division

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1. Benchmarked Institutions - HDR students by broad level of course, full year 2014

State/Institution	Doctorate by Research	Doctorate by Coursework	Master's (Extended)	Master's by Research	Other PG	TOTAL
University of Tasmania	1,308	0	0	135	1,589	3,032
The University of Newcastle	1,390	191	22	186	1,492	3,281
University of Wollongong	1,500	0	0	211	923	2,634
Deakin University	1,593	18	0	102	2,908	4,621
Macquarie University	1,735	5	0	404	1,274	3,418

2. HDR student profile – all students

		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
		EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.
Citizenship	International	490.6	593	623.0	760	647.3	788	636.5	782	644.8	776	604.7	712
	Domestic	606.8	896	625.3	929	615.5	933	639.3	924	657.5	981	679.4	997
Location	Onshore	1079.7	1455	1216.4	1625	1248.4	1669	1260.7	1668	1282.8	1729	1269.7	1685
	Offshore	17.8	34	31.9	64	14.4	52	15.1	38	19.5	28	14.4	24
Course Type	PhD	928.4	1204	1054.5	1369	1082.7	1420	1128.8	1458	1171.0	1535	1166.3	1517
	Research Masters	169.0	285	193.8	320	180.1	301	147.0	248	131.3	222	117.8	192
Load	Full time	1097.3	1488	1226.7	1642	1239.5	1644	1253.9	1653	1281.9	1713	1265.5	1675
	Part time	0.2	1	21.6	47	23.3	77	21.9	53	20.4	44	18.5	34
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1097.4</b>	<b>1489</b>	<b>1248.3</b>	<b>1689</b>	<b>1262.8</b>	<b>1721</b>	<b>1275.8</b>	<b>1706</b>	<b>1302.3</b>	<b>1757</b>	<b>1284.1</b>	<b>1709</b>

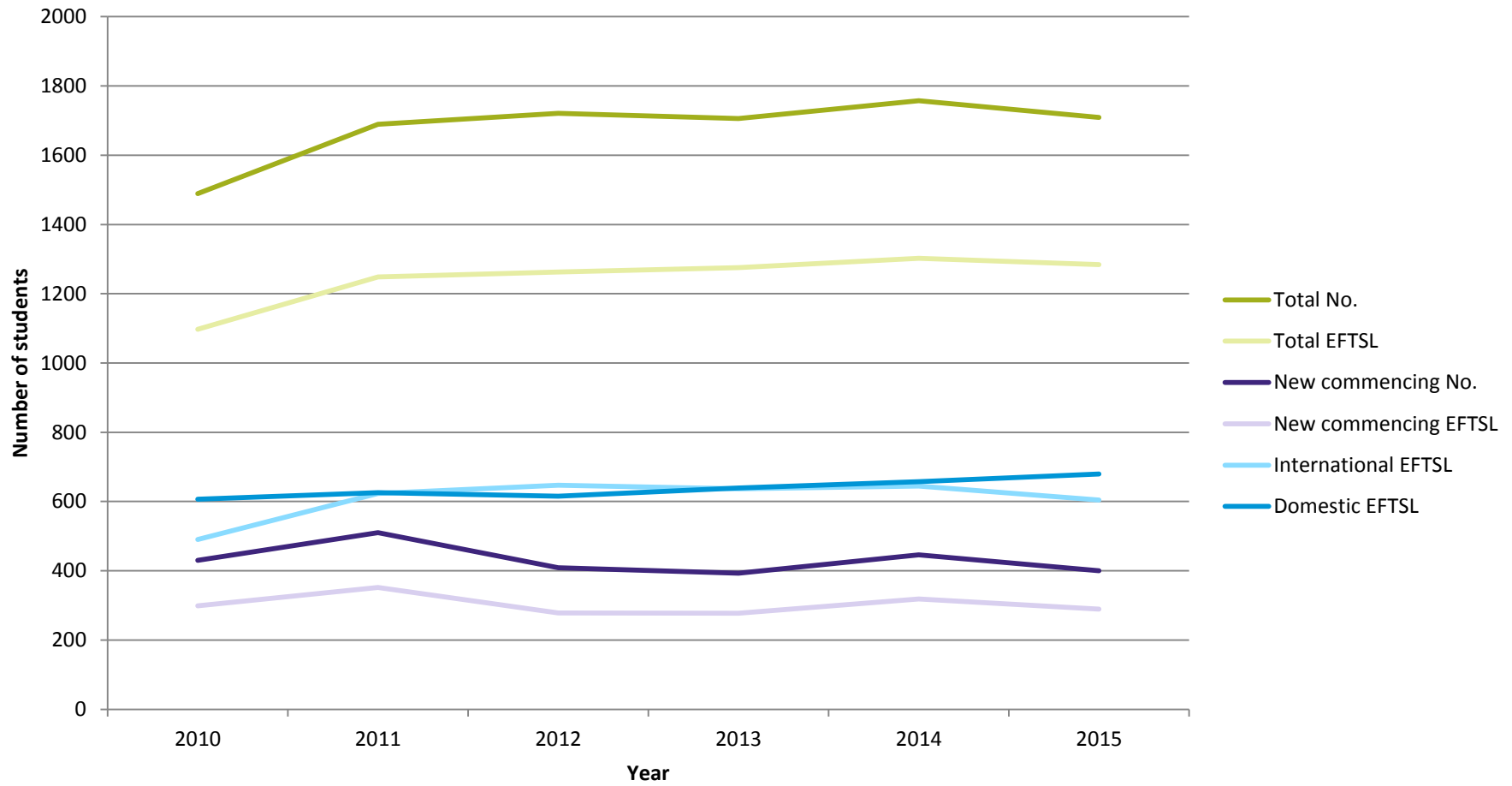
### 3. HDR student profile – commencing students

		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
		EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.	EFTSL	No.
<b>Citizenship</b>	International	158.7	227	204.2	285	127.6	181	126.0	184	155.8	213	113.0	154
	Domestic	140.3	203	147.9	225	150.6	228	151.1	209	162.8	233	176.4	246
<b>Location</b>	Onshore	282.8	398	340.4	489	277.8	408	277.1	393	318.1	445	289.3	400
	Offshore	16.3	32	11.8	21	0.4	1			0.5	1		
<b>Course Type</b>	PhD	231.7	326	260.8	369	224.8	322	228.9	315	266.8	366	248.5	340
	Research Masters	67.3	104	91.4	141	53.4	87	48.2	78	51.8	80	40.8	60
<b>Load</b>	Full time	298.9	429	336.1	479	270.8	385	265.1	374	307.8	425	278.5	382
	Part time	0.2	1	16.0	31	7.4	24	12.0	19	10.8	21	10.8	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>299.0</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>352.1</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>278.2</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>277.1</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>318.6</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>289.3</b>	<b>400</b>

### 4. UOW HDR Commencements – 2007-2014

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
UOW HDR commencements (headcount)	284	326	336	415	472	398	367	423
UOW market share (%)	2.4	2.8	2.6	3	3.5	2.7	2.5	2.8
National rank	15	15	13	10	11	14	16	12
Sector	11847	11753	12845	13558	13686	14046	14577	15046

Figure 1 - HDR Student Profile



## 5. HDR Scholarships

Type	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016 (as at 13/4/2016)	
	No. offered	Stipend pa	No. offered	Stipend pa	No. offered	Stipend pa	No. Offered	Stipend pa	No. Offered	Stipend pa	No. Offered	Stipend pa	No. Offered	Stipend pa
University (living allowance)	54	\$22,500	34	\$22,860	30	\$23,728	45	\$24,653	40	\$25,392	48	\$25,849	48	\$26,288
University (tuition for course)	79		76		74		98		112		93		49	
University (tuition for session)	48		35		105		125		139		112		41	
Matching	11	\$22,500	17	\$22,860	28	\$23,728	28	\$24,653	51	\$25,392	45	\$25,849	19	\$26,288
<b>Total Uni</b>	<b>192</b>		<b>162</b>		<b>237</b>		<b>268</b>		<b>342</b>		<b>298</b>		<b>157</b>	
APA	56	\$22,500	68	\$22,860	84	\$23,728	101	\$24,653	79	\$25,392	94	\$25,849	86	\$26,288
IPRS	6		7		7		5		6		11		0	
AusAid	4	\$25,000	4	\$26,800	6	\$28,072	2	\$30,003	2	\$30,003	2	\$30,003	4	\$30,003
Endeavour award - Incoming	5		4		1		3		2		0		1	
Endeavour award - Outgoing	1		1		0		0		0		0		0	
China	24		23		25		28		31		17		6	
Vietnam	9		25		15		4		5		0		0	
Other foreign gov't														
Industry APAI	11	\$27,222	6	\$27,651	1	\$28,715	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A	0	N/A
<b>Total External</b>	<b>116</b>		<b>138</b>		<b>139</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>125</b>		<b>124</b>		<b>97</b>	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>308</b>		<b>300</b>		<b>376</b>		<b>411</b>		<b>467</b>		<b>422</b>		<b>254</b>	

## 6. HDR Student Outcomes by Student Type (Domestic/International)

**Rules:** UOW\_YEAR\_START is based on the year the student received their offer. The cohort of commencers, based on offer year, was then joined to their current course status. Where the current course status was either 'Cancelled', 'Discontinued', 'Excluded' or 'Lapsed', then students were deemed to be 'Dropped out'. Where the current course status was 'Complete' then students were deemed to be 'Complete'. Otherwise for all other course statuses, students were deemed to be 'still studying'.

Year	Course Type	Total number of students commenced	Completed		Dropped out		Still studying	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2010	Domestic	270	109	40.37	79	29.26	82	30.37
	Int	238	130	54.62	45	18.91	63	26.47
2011	Domestic	298	90	30.2	78	26.17	130	43.63
	Int	301	145	48.17	37	12.29	119	39.53
2012	Domestic	286	49	17.13	56	19.58	181	63.29
	Int	243	46	18.93	25	10.29	172	70.78
2013	Domestic	246	10	4.07	47	19.11	189	76.83
	Int	246	14	5.69	22	8.94	210	85.37
2014	Domestic	261	4	1.53	47	18.01	210	80.46
	Int	265	4	1.51	17	6.42	244	92.08
2015	Domestic	258	2	0.78	26	10.08	230	89.15
	Int	172	2	1.16	13	7.56	157	91.28
2016	Domestic	154			2	1.3	152	98.7
	Int	83			1	1.2	82	98.8

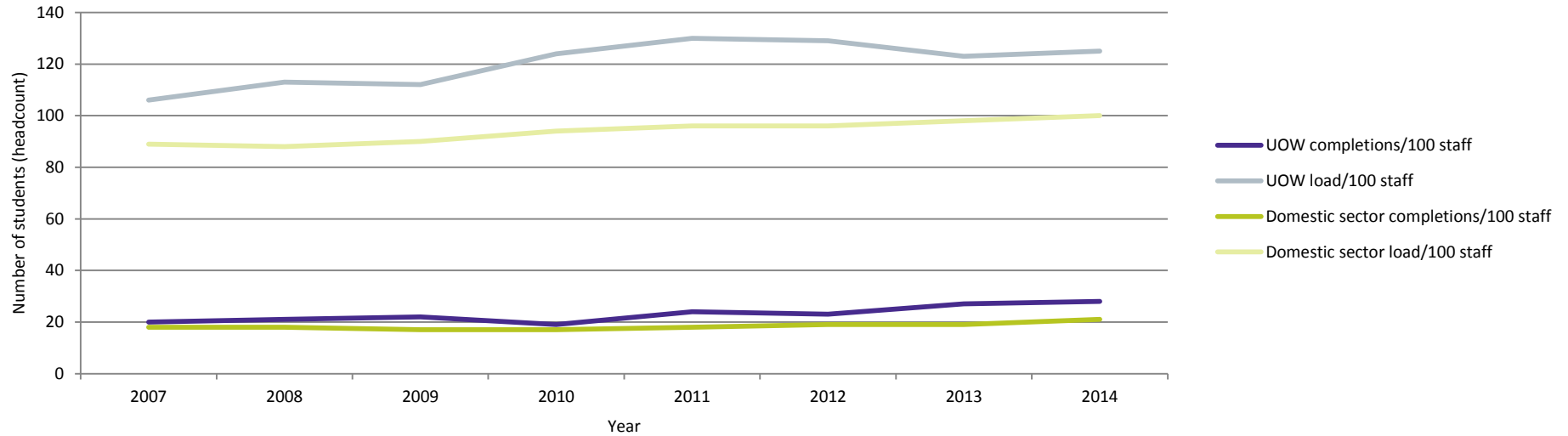
### 7. HDR Student Completions

Number of Completions	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Doctorate	135	169	175	201	238	228
Masters by Research	33	58	58	74	52	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>272</b>

### 8. UOW HDR completions and load/100 staff vs domestic sector

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
UOW	completions/100 staff	20	21	22	19	24	23	27	28
	load/100 staff	106	113	112	124	130	129	123	125
Sector (domestic)	completions/100 staff	18	18	17	17	18	19	19	21
	load/100 staff	89	88	90	94	96	96	98	100

Figure 2. UOW HDR completions and load/100 staff vs. domestic sector



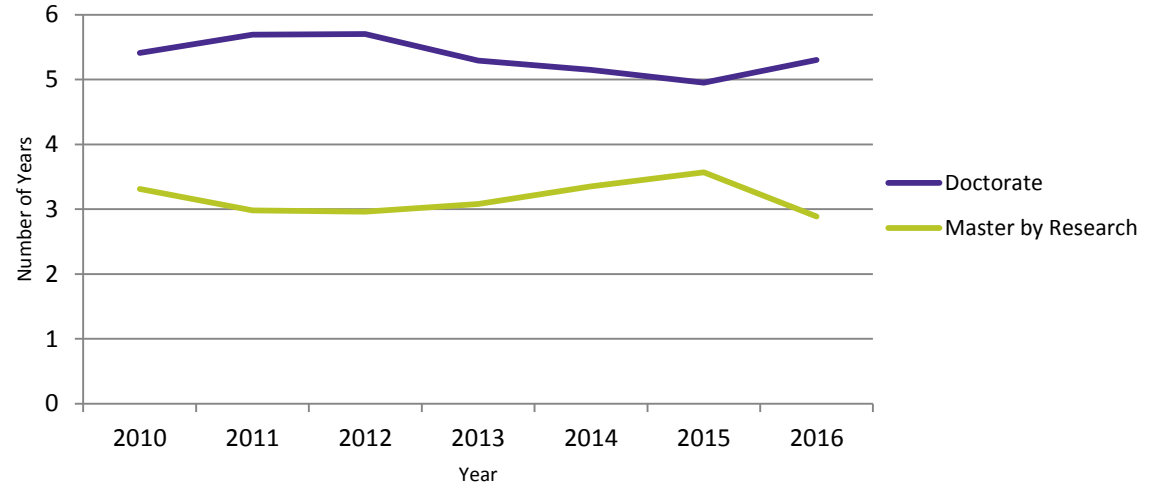


## 9. Completion times

**Rules:** Completion time - the average number of years which has elapsed between the student's first session of enrolment (using the first day of session as the reference date) and the completion date for the student course recorded in SAI.

Completion Year	Masters by Research	Doctorate
2010	3.31	5.41
2011	2.98	5.69
2012	2.96	5.7
2013	3.08	5.29
2014	3.35	5.15
2015	3.57	4.95
2016	2.89	5.3

Figure 2a - Average Course Completion Times



## 10. Examination times

**Rules:** Average number of months between the thesis submission date recorded in SAI and the completion date recorded in SAI

COMPLETION YEAR	MONTHS
2010	6.5
2011	6.6
2012	6.9
2013	6.7
2014	6.8
2015	6.4
2016	6.8

## 11. Examination outcomes – UOW PhD Thesis Examination Decisions 2014-2015

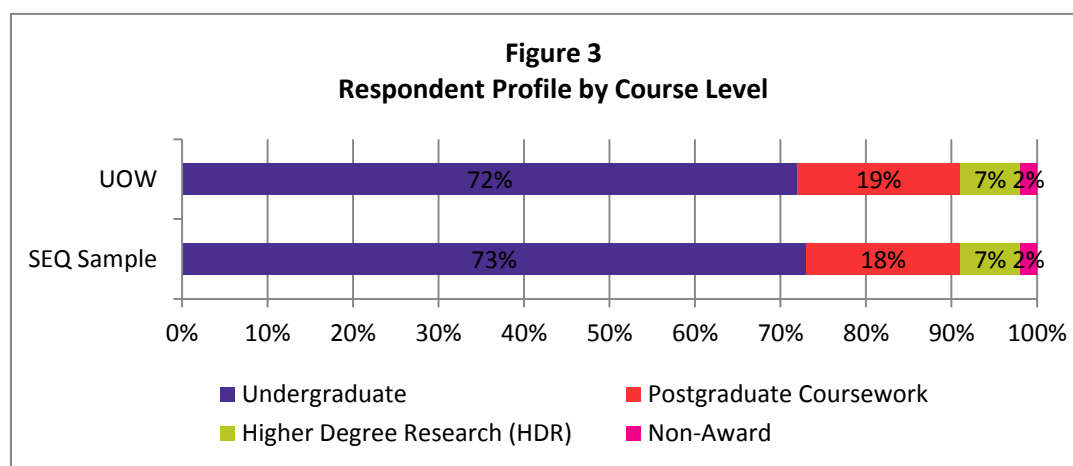
Outcome from first round of examination by TEC (based on two examiners reports)

Outcome	AIIM	BUS	EIS	LHA	SMAH	SOC	Total
Passed without revisions	1	5	7	10	8	2	<b>33</b>
Passed with minor revisions	36	32	151	56	56	30	<b>361</b>
Passed with substantial revisions	5	20	52	31	30	25	<b>163</b>
Third examiner required	1	2	3	3	2	2	<b>13</b>
Further study required	0	2	2	2	3	1	<b>10</b>
Oral examination required	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Downgrade to Masters	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Fail	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>580</b>

## 12. 2015 SEQ Overview of feedback from Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students on HDR related questions.

### a. HDR Demographics

6.7% of SEQ respondents identified themselves as Higher Degree Research (HDR) students as illustrated in Figure 3.



**b. 2014-2015 SEQ comparison**

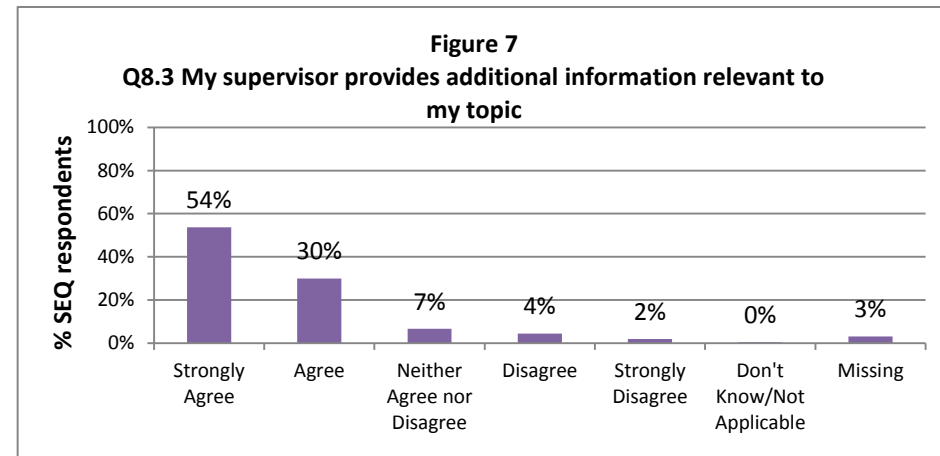
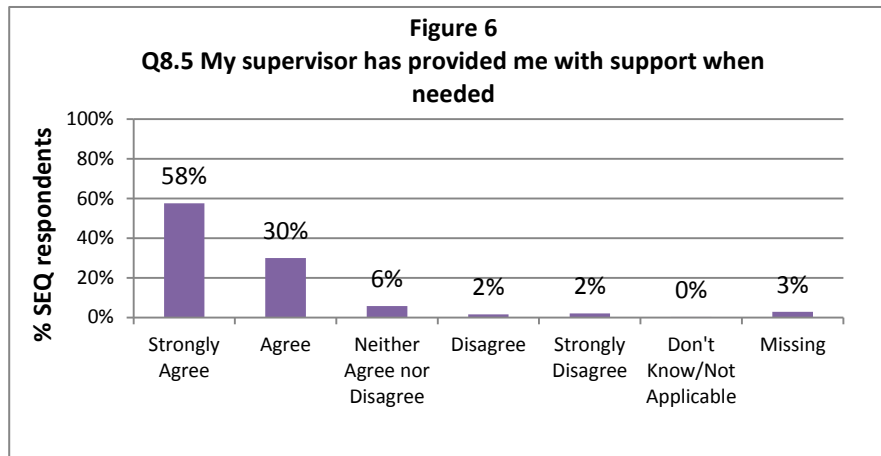
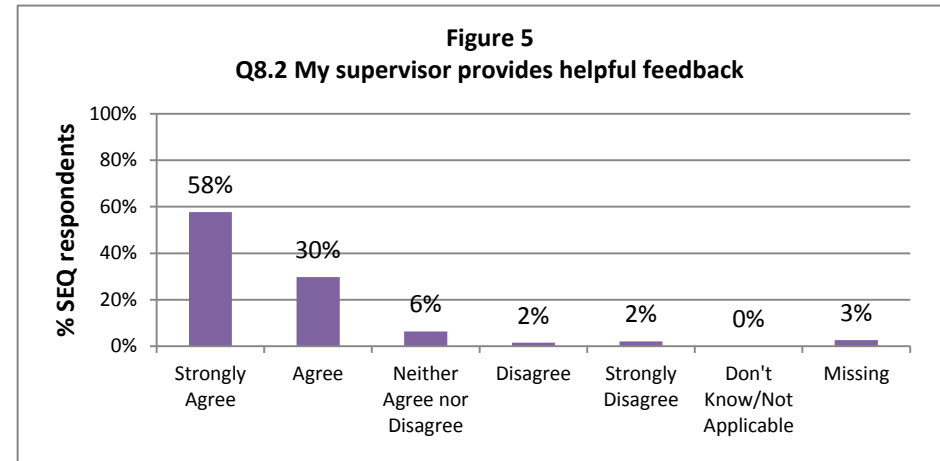
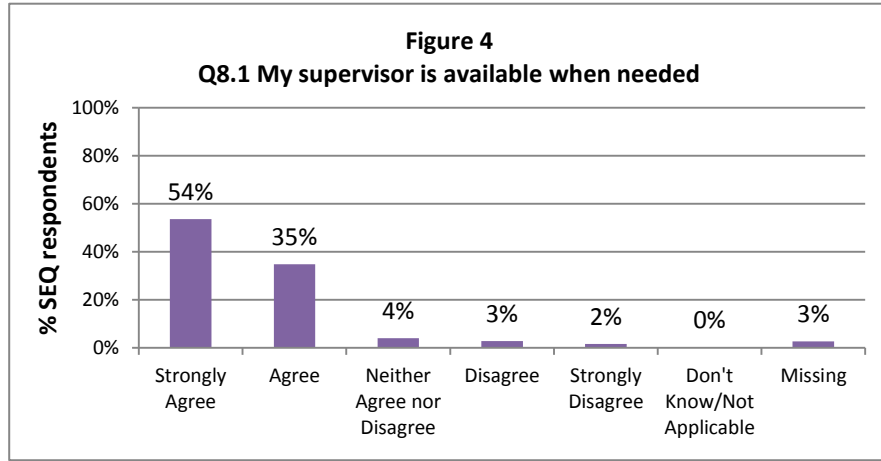
The HDR questions introduced in the 2014 SEQ were included in the 2015 SEQ instrument for comparative analysis. There is an upwards trend in the results for all HDR questions as presented in the table below.

**2014-2015 SEQ Comparison - HDR**

SEQ Statement	2014				2015			
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	N/A / Did not answer question	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Don't Know/ N/A /Did not answer the question
<b>Only answered by Higher Degree Research (HDR) students</b>								
<b>My supervisor is available when needed</b>	32 (4.3%)	84 (11.2%)	599 (79.9%)	35 (4.7%)	24 (4.6%)	21 (4.0%)	464 (88.5%)	15 (2.9%)
<b>My supervisor provides helpful feedback</b>	18 (2.4%)	79 (10.5%)	616 (82.1%)	37 (5.0%)	19 (3.6%)	33 (6.3%)	458 (87.4%)	14 (2.7%)
<b>My supervisor provides additional information relevant to my topic</b>	32 (4.3%)	105 (14.0%)	569 (75.9%)	44 (5.9%)	33 (6.3%)	35 (6.7%)	439 (83.6%)	18 (3.5%)
<b>My supervisor provides timely feedback</b>	34 (4.5%)	94 (12.5%)	585 (78%)	37 (5.0%)	33 (6.3%)	35 (6.7%)	439 (83.8%)	17 (3.3%)
<b>My supervisor has provided me with support when needed.</b>	23 (3.1%)	63 (8.4%)	621 (82.8%)	43 (5.7%)	19 (3.6%)	30 (5.7%)	459 (87.6%)	16 (3.1%)
<b>My supervisor thinks about my goals rather than publications that will be generated from my research</b>	39 (5.2%)	129 (17.2%)	493 (65.7%)	89 (11.8%)	31 (5.9%)	62 (11.8%)	407 (77.7%)	24 (4.5%)
<b>I am aware that a Career Counsellor is available for Higher Degree Research Students</b>	95 (12.7%)	74 (9.9%)	436 (58.1%)	145 (19.3%)	57 (10.9%)	56 (10.7%)	356 (67.9%)	55 (10.5%)

**c. Institution level results**

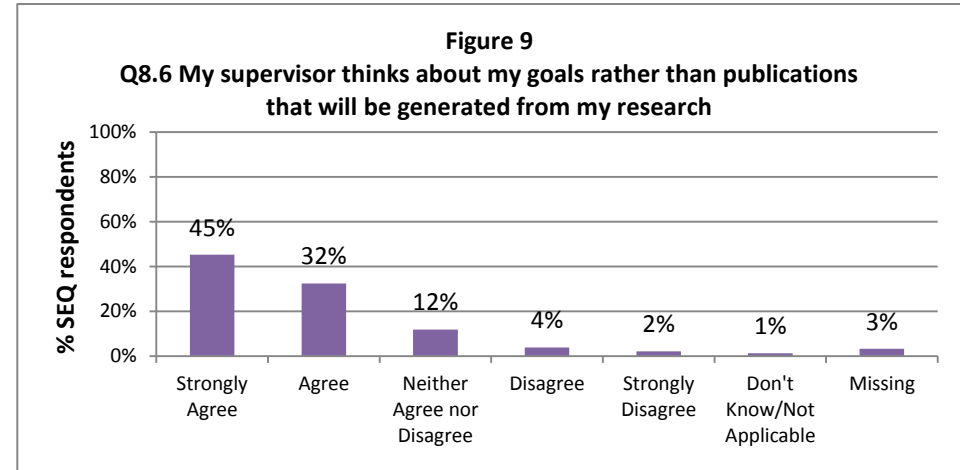
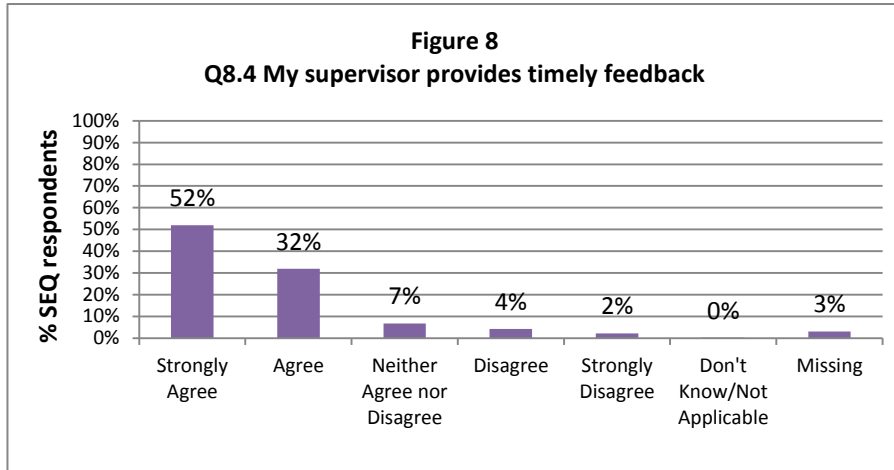
Of those respondents who identified as a HDR student, 88.5% strongly agreed/agreed their supervisor is available when needed (Figure 4) and 87.4% strongly agreed/agreed their supervisor provides helpful feedback (Figure 5).



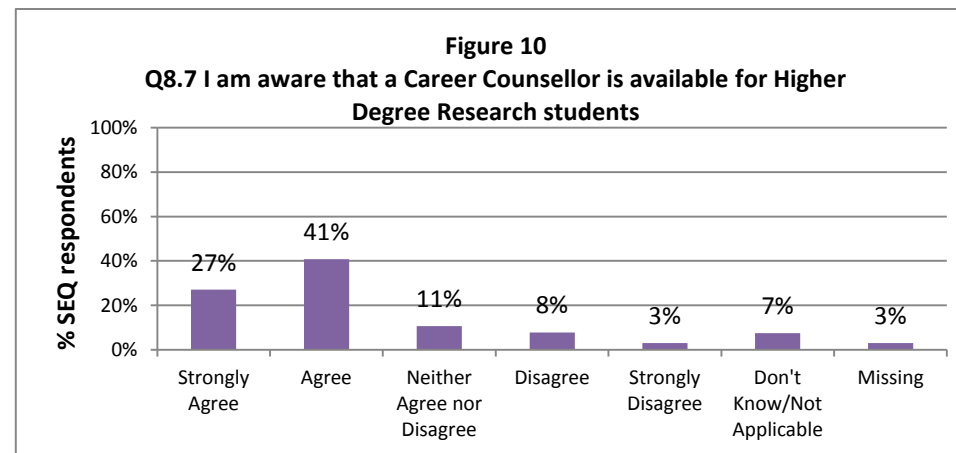
In Figure 6, 87.6% of HDR students strongly agree/agree their supervisor provides them with support when needed. This result is pleasing and is an improvement from the previous year (82.8%). Similarly, 83.6% of HDR students responded 'strongly agree'/'agree' to Q8.3, which has increased by 7.7% from 2014 (Figure 7 Error! Reference source not found.).

A high proportion of HDR students (83.8%) responded 'strongly agree/agree' to Q8.4; this result has increased by 5.8% from 2014 (Figure 8).

The majority of HDR students (77.7%) strongly agree/agree their supervisor thinks about their goals rather than publications generated from their research (Figure 9).



In Figure 10, 67.9% of HDR respondents are aware a Careers Counsellor is available for this specific cohort.





# HDR STUDENT LIFECYCLE REVIEW

## POLICY FRAMEWORK

## POLICIES AND GUIDELINES RELATING TO HDR STUDENTS

	UOW	UTAS	Newcastle	Macquarie	Deakin
Code or Rule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Code of Practice – Research</a></li> <li><a href="#">HDR Thesis by Compilation Rules</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Rule 4 - Rules of Graduate Research</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Rules Governing Higher Doctoral Degrees</a></li> <li><a href="#">Rules Governing Research Higher Degrees</a></li> <li><a href="#">Rules Governing Postgraduate Research Scholarships</a></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research Student Code of Conduct</a></li> </ul>
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research (HDR) Academic Complaints Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervision and Resources Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Joint Doctor of Philosophy Agreement Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Scholarships Selection Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Research Misconduct Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Student Assignment of Intellectual Property Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Fees Policy</a> (includes tuition fees for overtime HDR students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree by Research Admissions Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree by Research Candidature Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree by Research Graduate Research Coordination Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree by Research Minimum Infrastructure and Resources Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree by Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Code of Practice for Research Higher Degree Candidature Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Collaborative Research and Ethics Approval Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Responsible Conduct of Research Policy</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Degree Transfer Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Out of Time Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Policy</a></li> </ul>
Procedure			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Peer Review of Research Proposals Submitted for Ethics Approval Procedure</a></li> <li><a href="#">Research Thesis with a Creative Component Procedures</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">HDR and MRes Termination of Candidature Procedure</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Offsite Research (Commencing) Procedure</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Offsite Research (Continuing) Procedure</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Out of Time Extension Procedure</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Assessment procedure</a> Schedule A: <a href="#">List of specified masters degrees</a> Schedule B: <a href="#">Restricted access to thesis</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Admission, Selection and Enrolment procedure</a> Schedule A: <a href="#">Minimum entry requirements for higher degrees by research</a> Schedule B: <a href="#">Higher degrees by research English language requirements</a> Schedule C: <a href="#">Minimum resources for higher degree by research students</a> Schedule D: <a href="#">List of specified masters degrees</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Supervision procedure</a> Schedule A: <a href="#">Qualifications and other requirements for HDR Supervision</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Academic Progress procedure</a> Schedule A: <a href="#">Confirmation of candidature standards</a> Schedule B: <a href="#">Progress management of 'at risk' HDR students</a> Schedule C: <a href="#">List of specified masters degrees</a></li> </ul>
Guideline	<p><b>UOW Guidelines (formal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">HDR Study by Distance Learning Guidelines</a></li> <li><a href="#">Joint Doctor of Philosophy Degree Guidelines</a></li> </ul> <p><b>GRS Guidelines (not on the UOW Policy Directory)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Course Transfer Guidelines</a></li> <li><a href="#">Research Proposal Review Guidelines</a> (LHA Faculty only)</li> <li><a href="#">HDR Progress Review Guidelines</a></li> <li><a href="#">Guidelines for Preparation, Submission and Examination of HDR Theses</a></li> <li><a href="#">Guidelines for Probation Supervisors</a></li> <li><a href="#">Research Proposal Review (RPR) Guidelines</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Guidelines for incorporating publications into Thesis</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Authorship of Research Guideline</a></li> <li><a href="#">Conflict of Interest Guideline for Research Higher Degree Supervisors</a></li> <li><a href="#">Coursework Professional Doctorates Guidelines</a></li> <li><a href="#">Inclusive Research Practice Guidelines</a></li> <li><a href="#">Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct Guidelines</a></li> <li><a href="#">Monitoring the Progress of Professional Doctorate Candidates in the Research Component of the Program Guideline</a></li> <li><a href="#">Open Access Guideline</a></li> <li><a href="#">Research Publication Responsibility Guideline</a></li> <li><a href="#">Coursework Program Teaching Qualification Guidelines</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Doctoral Equivalence Guideline</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Thesis by Publication Guideline</a></li> <li><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Thesis Re-Examination Guideline</a></li> </ul>	



# HDR STUDENT LIFECYCLE REVIEW

## **DESKTOP POLICY REVIEW**

University of Wollongong, Deakin University, University of Newcastle, Macquarie University, University of Tasmania

April 2016  
Business Improvement and Assurance Division



This desktop review covers the policies, procedures, guidelines and rules that constitute the governance and management of the HDR Student Lifecycle. Five Australian universities were examined: the University of Wollongong (UOW), University of Newcastle (Newcastle), Macquarie University (Macquarie), Deakin University (Deakin) and the University of Tasmania (UTAS). A summary table of relevant policies, procedures, guidelines and rules that were reviewed in the preparation of this report are outlined at attachment A.

Particular focus has been given to the following stages of the student lifecycle:

**1. The admittance of students to HDR Programs**

- a. Confirmation of enrolment
- b. Orientation
- c. Period of candidature

**2. HDR Supervision**

- a. Supervisor allocation
- b. Supervisor training
- c. Supervisor guidelines including roles and responsibilities

**3. Measuring and monitoring student progress**

- a. Research Proposal Review
- b. Annual Progress Reports

**4. Examination**

- a. Thesis examination processes
- b. Selection and appointment of examiners

# 1. THE ADMITTANCE OF STUDENTS TO HDR PROGRAMS

## SECTOR ANALYSIS

UNIVERSITY	POLICY/PROCEDURE
<b>UOW</b>	<p><a href="#">Admissions Rules</a></p> <p>The Admissions Rules outline the high-level institutional principles and list and describe standard admissions pathways and general requirements.</p> <p><i>'Admission to a HDR course is based on academic merit, and endorsement from the relevant Executive Dean or nominee that adequate supervision, infrastructure and other resources and facilities are available to support candidature'</i></p> <p><a href="#">Admissions Procedures</a></p> <p>The Admissions Procedures outline the general process for HDR applications. The Central Admissions team pre-assess applications, which are then forwarded to the Faculty for the Executive Dean or nominee to review.</p> <p>Period of candidature:</p> <p>PhD candidature: domestic students– up to 4 years FT (most commonly 3 years); international students – up to 3 years FT.</p>
<b>Deakin</b>	<p><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Policy</a></p> <p>This Policy Articulates the high-level principles and responsibilities of the University in offering higher degrees by research (HDR), the below procedure offers more prescriptive guidance.</p> <p><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Admission, Selection and Enrolment Procedure</a></p> <p>The Procedure outlines the general process for HDR applications.</p> <p><i>'The Head of Academic Unit or nominee, will consider applications for HDR courses and may make a recommendation to the Faculty Executive Dean or Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Development and Training or their nominee for the student to be admitted taking into account a selection of criteria'</i> [referenced in the procedure]</p> <p><a href="#">Minimum Entry Requirements:</a></p>

Referenced in the above Procedure, minimum entry requirements for HDR applicants are revised annually and approved by the Academic Board (Academic Senate equivalent) as well as English language requirements.

Doctoral candidates should be aiming to submit their thesis within three years (including the period of provisional candidature leading up to confirmation) if enrolled full-time

**Newcastle** [Rules Governing Research Higher Degrees:](#)

The Rules state that:

*'Academic Senate is authorised on the recommendation of the Research Committee to approve special admissions pathways and specific Faculty admission and selection criteria. The Assistant Dean (Research Training) is authorised to prescribe additional admission requirements when considering an admission to candidature.'*

*'The Assistant Dean (Research Training) and Dean of Graduate Studies are authorised to make an offer of admission to a Research Higher Degree, where the applicant has met the admission requirements specified in clause 18.'*

Admission – General

- Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research& Innovation) believes the learning outcomes of the program can be met, they are authorised to waive the English language proficiency requirements for a Research Higher Degree applicant, subject to the provisions listed in the English Language Proficiency Procedure.
- The President of Academic Senate is authorised to consider and determine the outcome of an appeal against a decision on the waiving of English language proficiency requirements, academic or additional admission requirements.

Candidates are expected to complete their degree within four years of full-time study or eight years of part-time study.

**Macquarie** [Higher Degree Research Rules](#)

The Rules outline the high-level institutional principles and list and describe standard admissions pathways and general requirements.

Standard period of candidature: 2013 or earlier Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is 4 years for FT or 8 years PT. 2014 or later the PhD is 3 years FT or equiv.

**UTAS** [Higher Degrees by Research Admissions Policy](#)

The Policy outlines the high-level institutional principles and lists and describes standard admissions pathways and general requirements.

*It states that offers of admission to HDR candidature shall be made only by the Dean of Graduate Research.*

PhD candidature runs for a minimum duration of two years and a maximum of four years full-time (or part-time equivalent).

**POTENTIAL RISKS/ISSUES:**

Recent audits and projects have identified a number of risks and issues in the current state of HDR admissions, and UOW admissions more broadly. Broader issues are currently being addressed under the SSD-initiated *Admissions Improvement Roadmap* which seeks to review institutional admissions principles and decision-making to inform a customer-centric admissions experience and greater clarity and visibility of processes between SSD, Faculties and UOW College. Some key risks and issues are as below:

- Potential inconsistencies in course assessment (lack of assessment guidelines)
- Authenticity of supporting documentation (no formal back-to-source verification of documentation)

## 2. HDR SUPERVISION

- Supervisor allocation
- Supervisor training
- Supervisor guidelines including roles and responsibilities, support levels provided to students

### SECTOR ANALYSIS

UNIVERSITY	POLICY/PROCEDURE
UOW	<p><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Supervision and Resources Policy</a></p> <p>At a high level, this policy outlines responsibilities of key parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsibility of UOW – to establish a framework of policies and procedures guiding HDR practices</li><li>• Responsibility of Faculties – the provision of suitable academic infrastructure/funding for HDR students</li><li>• Principal Supervisor – to lead HDR candidate project direction and execution</li><li>• Co-Supervisor/Associate – a supplementary role (as above)</li></ul> <p>The Policy establishes that two supervisors are required for a HDR student. The policy describes supervision and guidance as ‘providing advice and instruction, support and mentoring, review and criticism to enable the candidate to complete the research and produce a thesis to the best of the candidate’s ability.’</p> <p>The Policy makes mention of multi-disciplinary research briefly:</p> <p><i>In some cases, e.g. where the topic is multi-disciplinary a panel <b>could be formed</b> to advise the HDR candidate; however, <b>one academic staff member, meeting the relevant criteria, must be appointed as Principal Supervisor.</b> All other supervisory panel members will be listed as Co-supervisors or Associate supervisor as appropriate.</i></p>
Deakin	<p><a href="#">Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Supervision Procedure</a></p> <p>At a high level, this policy outlines key responsibilities.</p> <p>There is no mention of multi-disciplinary research and guidance for these scenarios.</p> <p>The Policy requires that prospective supervisors do not exceed explicit supervisory loads (e.g. principal supervisors are limited to a supervisory load not</p>

exceeding seven full-time equivalent HDR students, and not more than ten individual HDR students).

The Policy allows for the appointment of research supervisors and stipulates the criteria to be met for applications for research supervisors. Research supervisors are defined as 'an eminent member of the University professoriate who provides high level advice to inform the supervision of a student's project but is not expected to carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of a principal or executive supervisor'. The Policy also distinguishes between principal supervisor, executive supervisor, associate supervisor, support supervisor and external supervisor.

[Schedule A: Qualifications and Other Requirements for Higher Degree by Research Supervision](#)

This schedule outlines qualifications and requirements that need to be met to appoint a prospective supervisor.

**Newcastle** [Code of Practice for Research Higher Degree Candidature Policy](#)

The Policy requires that supervisors do not exceed supervisory loads (the number of candidates assigned to a supervisor is strictly monitored by the Assistant Dean (Research Training) and does not exceed the equivalent of five full-time research higher degree candidates, without the approval of the Pro Vice-Chancellor or nominee).

There is no mention of multi-disciplinary research and guidance for these scenarios.

**Macquarie** [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#)

At a high level, this policy outlines key responsibilities and duties for supervision. It is not prescriptive as to a minimum standard that must be adhered to.

[Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure](#)

There is no mention of multi-disciplinary research and guidance for these scenarios.

The Procedure quite clearly outlines key responsibilities across all parties in a concise manner. Helpful and clear [FAQs](#)

The Procedure gives explicit guidelines on meeting frequency with candidates and supporting programs

Co-supervisor – an academic staff member who has not supervised a HDR candidate to completion or who is an appointment of less than three years. Co-supervisors work under the direction of the principal supervisor

**UTAS** [Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy](#)

Sets the high-level principles:

*Supervising doctoral candidates is among the most important work that university staff can undertake. It is quite rightly regarded as the most significant and intensive teaching and mentoring experience accorded to an academic.*

Work-load is clearly addressed – *Supervisors are normally not permitted to be Primary Supervisor for more than the equivalent of seven (7) full-time candidates.*

UTAS maintain a register of supervisors – reviewed regularly and based on criteria. Very comprehensive.

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR HDR SUPERVISORS

### SECTOR ANALYSIS

UNIVERSITY	POLICY/PROCEDURE
<b>UOW</b>	<p><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Supervision and Resources Policy</a></p> <p>Articulates high-level principles:</p> <p><i>To provide training and mentoring opportunities to assist academic staff in improving their understanding and skill in the supervision of HDR candidates.</i></p> <p>Supervisor Resources: Links and various materials <a href="http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rsc/supervisor/UOW008971.html">http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rsc/supervisor/UOW008971.html</a></p>
<b>Deakin</b>	<p><a href="#">Schedule A: Qualifications and Other Requirements for Higher Degree by Research Supervision</a></p> <p>Supervisors are encouraged to focus on professional development activities:</p> <p><i>e.g. 'Participation in one of the required supervisor training workshops presented by the Deakin Research Training Group.'</i></p>
<b>Newcastle</b>	<p>Workshops are run for supervisors and links to support materials are made available <a href="https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/resources/rhd-supervision/support-materials">https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/resources/rhd-supervision/support-materials</a></p>
<b>Macquarie</b>	<p>Supervisor register: <a href="https://mqsr.mq.edu.au/mqsr">https://mqsr.mq.edu.au/mqsr</a>. To remain on the register, supervisors must be up to date with the supervisor enhancement program</p>

(completed initial workshop and an annual update workshop).

Workshops are run for supervisors [http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/workshops\\_programs/sep/](http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/workshops_programs/sep/) .

**UTAS**

Online resources and guidance about supporting candidates' mental health <http://www.utas.edu.au/research/graduate-research/candidates-mental-health>

More so than other institutions, there is focus on support of the 'whole student'



### 3. MEASURING AND MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

- Research Proposal Review (year 1)
- Annual Progress Reports

#### SECTOR ANALYSIS

UNIVERSITY	POLICY/PROCEDURE
UOW	<p><a href="#">Higher Degree Research Supervision and Resources Policy</a></p> <p>The HPS and ADRs are tasked with the responsibility to:</p> <p><i>To implement the Research Proposal Review and Probation assessment processes (when needed) for HDR candidates within the Academic Units for which they have responsibility.</i></p> <p><a href="#">Higher Degree Research (HDR) Progress Review Guidelines</a></p> <p><b>Research Proposal Review</b></p> <p>The guidelines establish the responsibility for faculties to develop procedures for a formal review of the candidate’s research proposal.</p> <p><i>It establishes that a Research Proposal Review must be undertaken before 48cp (1.0 EFTSL) of the degree is completed, except for research degrees containing coursework components in which case the review should be completed before 72cp (1.5 EFTSL) of the degree is completed. The details of the Research Proposal Review (RPR) should meet Faculty Guidelines and must include: an oral research presentation, preparation of a written research plan and preliminary literature review, a timetable for the coming year, and a statement of the resources required to complete the project. A Research Proposal Review Committee, having attended the seminar and considered the documentation, will make recommendations concerning the full proposal and future enrolment, which will be given to the student. A copy of the student’s written research proposal must be kept in the Faculty and the RPR form must be lodged with the Graduate Research School (GRS).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">LHA Research Proposal Review Guidelines</a></li><li>• <a href="#">BUS Research Proposal Review Procedure</a> (flowchart within this procedure outlining the steps in the process)</li><li>• <a href="#">SOC Research Proposal Presentation Guidelines</a></li></ul> <p><b>Annual Progress Report</b></p>

*A formal annual review of progress of all students takes place in the latter part of each year. Written reports from the student and the supervisor are an important and formal means to monitor the progress of the student.*

**Deakin** [Higher Degrees by Research \(HDR\) Academic Progress Procedure](#)

‘Confirmation of candidature’ process must take place in order for a student to progress from provisional to full candidature.

Very clearly stipulated review and appeals processes.

[Schedule A: Confirmation of Candidature Standards](#)

*Faculties or Institutes will determine the specific requirements of oral presentations and written submissions.*

**Newcastle** **Candidature –Confirmation and Progression**

‘Confirmation of candidature’ process must take place in order for a student to progress from provisional to full candidature. Requirements are clearly articulated. Candidates who are unsuccessful in their first attempt are able to revise their work and undertake a second attempt at confirmation within three months (FTE). A candidate may not undergo a third attempt at confirmation, unless, in exceptional circumstances, an additional attempt at confirmation is approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The Dean of Graduate Studies is authorised to approve procedures to assist progression through a Research Higher Degree.

In addition to the confirmation process and the progress report(s), the supervisor and the School may submit reports on the candidate’s progress to the Assistant Dean (Research Training) and Dean of Graduate Studies at any time.

**Macquarie** Review of progress is governed by the Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy. A report on the candidate’s work under rule 10(2) is to be documented in the Annual Progress Report (APR).

The APR is an online process. Participation in the APR process and completion of the Report is a *mandatory* requirement of higher degree research candidature.

Confidential feedback channel - The University acknowledges that at times candidates may experience issues that are affecting their progress but which they do not wish to put in writing in their Annual Progress Report. If you are unable to discuss these with your supervisor(s) or the Faculty Associate Dean (Higher Degree Research), you may request a confidential appointment with the Dean (Higher Degree Research),

**UTAS** [Higher Degree by Research Candidature Policy](#)

As specified in clause 14.2 and 14.3 of Rule 4, a Candidate will participate in a Confirmation of Candidature process which is required to be concluded before

the end of the first 12 months of candidature.

This process provides the opportunity to review the Candidate's academic development and performance, research plan, and resources and to make a recommendation about the viability of candidature.

All Confirmation of Candidature outcomes will be reported to and considered by the Dean of Graduate Research.

Doctoral and Masters (Research) Candidates are enrolled concurrently in The University's Graduate Certificate in Research.

#### **Annual Review of Progress**

To facilitate successful completion within a reasonable timeframe, the progress of HDR candidates is formally reviewed every 12 calendar months until submission. *The first annual review will involve a confirmation of candidature, as detailed in Section 3.7 of this policy (Higher Degree by Research Candidature Policy).* The Candidate has the right to have an additional person, who is not an immediate family member or legal representative, present.

Very clearly stipulated review and appeals processes.

#### 4. EXAMINATIONS (INCL THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE)

##### SECTOR ANALYSIS

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UNIVERSITY	POLICY/PROCEDURE
<p><b>UOW</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Guidelines for Preparation, Submission and Examination of HDR Theses</a></p> <p>A delegate of the Graduate Research School shall appoint at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for a Doctoral degree, two examiners of the thesis, each of whom shall be external to the University and</li> <li>• for a Research Masters Degree, two examiners of the thesis, not more than one of whom shall be internal to the University.</li> </ul> <p>The choice of examiners is a process involving both the student and the supervisor. Together they should generate a list of at least four examiners, having regard to the known disciplinary bias of those suggested. The final choice will be made from this list by the supervisor Head of Postgraduate Studies, in accordance with the Nominations of HDR Thesis Examiners Guidelines.</p> <p>Examiners are given 6-7 weeks to assess and return their reports</p> <p><i>For doctoral degrees, no two examiners will be from the same country.</i></p> <p>The reports from the examiners are considered by the Thesis Examination Committee, after receiving the comments of the Head of Postgraduate Studies on the reports. The Thesis Examination Committee determines the outcome of the examination</p> <p>The names of the examiners and copies of the examiners reports are made available to the student after the Thesis Examination Committee has made its determination</p>
<p><b>Deakin</b></p>	<p>Thesis Management: Through HDR Examinations – an online system which enables the entire thesis examination process to be handled electronically.</p> <p>Candidates should be encouraged to discuss potential examiners with their supervisor(s).</p> <p>No mention that examiners must be from different institutions</p> <p>Examiner Nominations:</p>

Are the responsibility of the supervisor and not the candidate

- must be provided before the thesis is submitted
- a minimum of four names must be provided
- at least two nominees must be from outside Australia – in rare cases where this may not be possible, an explanation must be provided in writing

If four experienced examiners at the required level cannot be found, it is possible to nominate up to one examiner without experience of examining at the level of the degree being sought. Such examiners are required to outline their qualifications and previous examination and supervision experience, and may only examine up to the level of the highest degree they have been awarded.

Examiners have six weeks to complete an examination and submit their report and recommendation. Examiners are permitted to remain anonymous, they have access to the other examiners reports but their names may not be disclosed

The Thesis Examination Subcommittee

- Will appoint at least three independent and appropriately qualified external examiners, selected from the four nominated by the Head of the Academic Unit.
- The names of examiners are not released to the student until after a decision on the examination outcome has been determined, and subject to the agreement of the examiners.
- At least two examiners must support the thesis at the level of the degree being sought before the Thesis Examination Subcommittee can pass the examination. For students enrolled in a doctoral degree, where the thesis is not of an appropriate standard for a doctoral degree but fulfils the criteria for the passing of an examination for a masters degree, it must have the support for this by at least two examiners.
- If consistent reports are received from two examiners, and the Head of Academic Unit recommends that the examination be passed, the Thesis Examination Subcommittee is not required to wait for the third examiner's report and may proceed to make a decision on the outcome.

Revision and re-examination

- If the Thesis Examination Subcommittee determines that a thesis is to be re-examined, the student will be limited to one re-examination. The student will resubmit the thesis by the deadline set by Deakin Research, which will be no later than 12 months after the student is notified of the results from the first examination.
- Where a thesis is re-examined, the re-submitted thesis will be sent back to the examiners making the request for re-examination. Where an original examiner is unable to act, a replacement examiner will be appointed to examine the revised thesis. The replacement examiner will be sent only the revised version of the thesis, and not the prior examiners' reports.
- The examination may be passed if the thesis has the support of two examiners through the combined first examination and re-examination processes.
- There is no option for further examination unless there is cause to set aside an examiner's report as described above, or there is a major

procedural irregularity in the process.

**Newcastle**

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall appoint two examiners and at least one reserve, none of whom shall normally be a member of the staff of the University. Examiners have 8 weeks to provide their written report. No two examiners can be from the same institution.

If a thesis is in an area that goes across two disciplines and appointed examiners are experts in a particular areas, reserve examiners should be identified accordingly.

Explicit and comprehensive definitions as to what defines a conflict of interest resulting in non-appointment of an examiner.

Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, before making any recommendation, the Committee may take one or more of the following actions:

- appoint an additional examiner;
- appoint an arbiter;
- invite the examiners to confer with each other and/or with the Committee, with a view to the presentation of a consolidated recommendation;
- direct that the candidate undertakes such further examinations or other work either oral, written or practical as the Committee may specify.

This schedule supports the implementation of the [rules governing research higher degrees \[000830\]](#). The rules describe each type of research higher degree qualification offered by the university and provide descriptions of authorisations for program management.

Relaxing Provision

To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any particular case, the President of Academic Senate, on the recommendation of the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor or relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor may relax any provision of the Schedule.

**Macquarie**

[Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy](#) outlines the requirements for the preparation, submission and examination of HDR theses at Macquarie University

It is expected that examiners will be able to complete their examination and submit reports within **five weeks** of receipt of the thesis

For Doctoral and Master of Philosophy degrees, examination panels are to include at least one international and one national examiner to maintain the international quality of Macquarie's HDR awards and to ensure examination is consistent with national standards. There will be no more than one examiner from any single institution appointed.

Supported by: [Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure](#), [Thesis Re-examination Guideline](#)

- Each thesis is examined by at least 3 examiners (PhD). Masters (2). In exceptional circumstances, the Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC) may agree to 2 examiners
- There must be one international examiner and no more than one from a single institution.
- The HDRC will determine the result. The determination will be finalised following a recommendation to HDRC by the Program and Examination

Sub-Committee (PESC)

- Only one submission for re-examination is permitted
- The candidate discusses possible examiners with the principal and other supervisors and approves the selection of the nominated thesis examiners by signing the appointment of examiners form.

UTAS

[HDR Thesis Preparation Submission and Examination Policy](#)

A HDR Thesis must normally be examined by two examiners in line with the Examination Procedures. Examiners are appointed by the Dean of Graduate Research following advice and a recommendation provided by the Head of School and must include at least one examiner of international standing.

At least one examiner will normally hold an academic appointment.

**Candidates should not be involved in the process of examiner nomination.** The identity of potential, nominated or confirmed examiners **must not** be released to the Candidate. However, the Candidate should be advised that they can request that certain examiners not be appointed. The identity of the examiners will be revealed to the Candidate at the conclusion of the examination process, after all corrections have been completed and approved by the Dean of Graduate Research.

**Examination of Thesis**

- The Graduate Research Office is responsible for administering the examination of all Doctoral Degrees and Masters Degrees (Research) under the direction of the Dean of Graduate Research.
- Each thesis will be examined by two independent examiners.
- Each examiner is required to individually and independently assess the merit of the Thesis and prepare a written report to assist the Candidate and to make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research in a format and within the time frame prescribed in the Examination Procedures.
- Thesis content will remain confidential during the examination period and the University reserves the right to request examiners to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement if deemed necessary.
- When both reports have been received from the Examiners, the Graduate Research Office shall send de-identified copies of the Examiners' recommendation form and reports to the Chair of Examiners. The Chair of Examiners must consult with the Supervisor(s) and submit comments and a recommendation on the examination outcome to the Dean of Graduate Research.
- At each stage the Dean of Graduate Research shall consider the recommendations of the Examiners and the Chair of Examiners before determining how to proceed to the next stage.
- Where the Thesis is to be revised taking account of the comments of Examiners, the reports and recommendations shall remain confidential until the Chair of Examiner's recommendation has been considered and approved by the Dean of Graduate Research.

## **ATTACHMENT 4**

### **Student Focus Group Questions**

1. In your experience, how do processes at UOW effectively or ineffectively admit students to HDR programs? (including the confirmation of enrolment process)
2. Is the process of supervisor allocation working? If not, how could it be improved?
3. The Graduate Research School is dedicated to providing professional and efficient service to students on all Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidature matters. What is your impression of the relationship between Faculties and the Graduate Research School?
4. How successful are orientation, training and support processes for HDR students?
5. How helpful is the support provided to you by your supervisor? Are you aware of any level of support provided to your supervisor by UOW?
6. Are supervision arrangements working between supervisors and co-supervisors?
7. How effective is the Research Proposal Review process?
8. How effective are the mechanisms available to measure progress (eg. Annual Progress Reports)?
9. In your view, which of the above eight questions rank in the top three as most critical to the effective governance of the HDR Student Life-Cycle?
10. Provide any additional feedback that in your view is relevant to this review.

Note. In the first Focus Group – EIS, questions 1 and 7 were presented as follows (the original set). Due to some confusion, these were re-worded for the remaining five sessions (as shown above).

1. In your experience, how do processes at UOW effectively or ineffectively admit students to HDR programs?
7. How effective are UOW policies and procedures for managing the confirmation of enrolment process (e.g. Research Proposal Review)?