



Variation of Candidature Procedure

Policy Hierarchy link	Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy		
Responsible Officer	Dean of Graduate Research		
Contact Officer	Director, Graduate Research School		
Superseded Documents	Not applicable		
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Associated Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of Delegations • Admissions Policy • Roles and Responsibilities of Postgraduate Research Coordinators Guideline • Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy • Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure • Occupational Health and Safety Policy • Intellectual Property Policy 		
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1. Purpose and Scope	1
2. Procedure	2
2.1 Changes in supervision, research area and/or program	2
2.1.1 Rationale	2
2.1.2 Approval process	2
2.1.3 Changes in supervision that are not at the request of a candidate	2
2.2 Leave, fieldwork, working at external locations or FT - PT transfers	2
2.2.1 Leave	2
2.2.2 Field work and working at external locations	2
2.2.3 Transfer between FT and PT candidature	3
2.2.4 Approval process	3
2.3 Extension or discontinuation of candidature	3
2.3.1 Extension	3
2.3.2 Discontinuation at the candidates request	3
2.3.3 Discontinuation after lapsed candidature	4
2.3.4 Approval process	4
2.4 Implementation	4
3. Review & History	4

1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure outlines the procedures for variation of higher degree research candidature. Types of variations included are:

- changes in research area and/or supervisor
- transfer from one program to another within the university
- leave
- fieldwork and working at non-UNSW approved locations
- transfer between full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) enrolment
- extension of candidatures beyond the maximum period
- discontinuation at the student's request (withdrawal)
- discontinuation of candidature when a candidature lapses

It applies to all research candidates, supervisors and positions responsible for management of higher degree research (HDR). The relevant Conditions for Award Policy should be read in conjunction with this procedure.

2. Procedure

When there is a need for a candidature to be varied, the relevant form and/or documentation must be submitted to the Graduate Research School for approval by the Dean of Graduate Research. Variations with minor likely impact on candidates or candidatures can be recommended by either the candidate themselves or the postgraduate research coordinator (PGC). Variations that are likely to have a more significant impact on candidates or candidatures are recommended by the Higher Degree Committee or equivalent (hereafter referred to as the Committee). **Appendix B** shows a summary of the approval pathways required for different categories of candidature variation.

2.1 Changes in supervision, research area and/or program

2.1.1 Rationale

Changes in candidature supervision arrangements, research area and program can involve issues relating to resources, supervisor eligibility and workload, Commonwealth Government sanctions and candidate eligibility. Research candidates may be financially disadvantaged if the changes impact adversely on scholarship eligibility and for international candidates, changes may affect visa and sponsorship eligibility. It is important that these issues are addressed appropriately prior to approval of requested changes.

2.1.2 Approval process

- (i). The candidate must complete the variation to candidature form provided on the Graduate Research School (GRS) website, indicating the variation(s) being requested.
- (ii). All requests should be accompanied by a signature from the candidate's supervisor. However there are situations where a supervisor's signature may not be required. Examples include where a supervisor has resigned from the University or in cases where there is a breakdown in the relationship between supervisor and candidate.
- (iii). All requests must be accompanied by a signature from the postgraduate research coordinator or Head of School, recommending that the variation(s) be approved.
- (iv). Requests for program transfer must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the GRS website.

2.1.3 Changes in supervision that are not at the request of a candidate

In some instances, changes in supervision arrangements may be required by the University. Any such changes that are not requested by the candidate should be managed according to the Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy.

2.2 Leave, fieldwork, working at external locations or FT - PT transfers

2.2.1 Leave

The main types of leave that are considered are approved leave from candidature, maternity leave and sick leave. When a candidate is on approved leave, they are not enrolled and not consuming semesters in their candidature. When on approved maternity or sick leave for less than a complete semester, enrolment status is typically maintained and candidature is extended by a period equivalent to the leave taken. The latter does not apply in cases of extended maternity leave or sick leave due to a protracted illness and candidates should seek advice from the GRS on leave conditions under these circumstances.

2.2.2 Field work and working at external locations

When candidates are on approved fieldwork and/or working at non-UNSW locations, they are enrolled and consuming semesters. It is important that arrangements are made by the School or Faculty to ensure candidates are appropriately supervised and that issues relating to resources, workplace health

and safety, intellectual property and research progress are considered and managed appropriately.

2.2.3 Transfer between FT and PT candidature

A transfer between FT and PT candidature is a straightforward request that typically is a result of a change in circumstances relating to a candidature. It is important that these are recorded on the student system for accurate calculation of the time consumed and to ensure that the candidate has the level of support appropriate to their circumstances.

2.2.4 Approval process

- (i). The candidate must complete a variation to candidature form, indicating the variation(s) being requested.
- (ii). All requests should be accompanied by a signature from the candidate's supervisor, indicating support for the variation(s) unless there are issues involved such as those outlined in 2.1.2 (ii).
- (iii). All requests must be accompanied by a signature from the postgraduate research coordinator or Head of School, recommending that the variation(s) be approved.
- (iv). Leave requests beyond the one year permitted must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the GRS website.
- (v). Requests to undertake fieldwork or work at an external location for a period of more than one year must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the variation form.

2.3 Extension or discontinuation of candidature

2.3.1 Extension

Circumstances may arise during a candidature where the research is not progressing as planned. This may result in the need to apply for an extension beyond the maximum period permitted for completion of a degree.

The Committee:

- (i). may recommend a one semester extension if satisfied that circumstances outside the control of the candidate have impacted on the candidature. A maximum of two, one semester extensions may be recommended by the Committee
- (ii). should only recommend extension beyond two semesters in total where extenuating circumstances are demonstrated.

Extenuating circumstances usually include significant technical or academic issues, including supervision, that are outside the control of the candidate. They do not typically include personal circumstances that require long periods of nonattendance during a semester. Under the latter circumstances, candidates should be advised to transfer to part-time enrolment or to apply for leave or discontinuation of candidature.

2.3.2 Discontinuation at the candidate's request

In some situations, candidates may not be in a position to complete their candidature and therefore they may wish to withdraw from their candidature via a discontinuation request.

Candidates may subsequently apply for re-admission. However they should be aware that if re-admission occurs within 3 years of the date of withdrawal, the time consumed before withdrawal may be added to their candidature according to Commonwealth Government legislation.

2.3.3 Discontinuation after lapsed candidature

Candidates who fail to re-enrol and subsequently do not respond to lapsed candidature notification and requests for information relating to their candidature may have their candidature discontinued by the University. Where a response to the lapsed candidature notification is received, the Committee will consider the response and recommend an action to the Dean of Graduate Research. The candidate may be asked to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated if the response received is inadequate.

Appendix B details the actions taken by the PGC and the Committee in discontinuing a candidature under such circumstances.

2.3.4 Approval process

- (i). The candidate must complete the variation to candidature form, indicating the variation(s) being requested.
- (ii). All requests must be accompanied by a signature from the candidate's supervisor, indicating support for the variation(s) unless there are issues involved such as those outlined in 2.1.2 (ii).
- (iii). All requests must be accompanied by a signature from the postgraduate research coordinator or Head of School, recommending that the variation(s) be approved.
- (iv). Requests to re-enrol beyond two years for a Masters or four years for a PhD must be considered by the Committee, and accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation as specified on the GRS website.

2.4 Implementation

All applications for variation as recommended by the School or Faculty will be implemented by GRS following approval by the Dean of Graduate Research. Candidates will be notified and variations will be updated on the student system. HDR candidates are required to check their enrolment status and ensure that it is up to date. International candidates are required to ensure they comply with visa and/or sponsorship conditions.

3. Review & History

This procedure is due for review three years from its date of effect.

Appendix A: History

Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1.0	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	23 October 2012	23 October 2012	New Procedure

Appendix B: PGC and HDC (the Committee) actions relating to variation of candidatures

Variation	Candidate or PGC	Committee
Transfer between FT and PT enrolment	All changes are requested by candidate and recommended by PGC	Not applicable
Discontinuation at the candidate's request	Changes are typically requested by candidate and recommended by PGC. The candidate may also make such requests directly to the Graduate Research School	Not applicable
Changes in research area and/or supervision	Changes are requested by candidate and recommended by PGC	Under certain circumstances, for example, where there are concerns about the ability to provide appropriate supervision or where government sanctions may apply, the Committee may be asked by the PGC to make recommendations on the requested change
Fieldwork or conducting research at a non-UNSW affiliated institution	Up to 2 semesters is recommended by the PGC	More than 2 semesters is recommended by the Committee
Approved leave	Up to 2 semesters is recommended by the PGC	More than 2 semesters is recommended by the Committee
Discontinuation of candidature when a candidature lapses	PGC recommends whether lapsed candidature notifications need to be sent to candidates. PGC recommends discontinuation of candidature where no response to the lapsed candidature notification is received	The Committee considers the candidature of the student where a response to the lapsed candidature notification is received. The Committee recommends show cause request or termination of candidature when an inadequate response is received
Extension of candidatures beyond the maximum period	PGC needs to submit to the Committee any extension request beyond 2 years for Master of Philosophy or Master by Research and beyond 4 years for Doctor of Philosophy	The Committee makes recommendations on all extensions to candidature beyond the maximum period
Transfer from one program to another within the university	PGC needs to submit to the Committee any transfer request regardless of whether it is between schools or between Faculties	The Committee makes recommendations on all transfers