

Research Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure

Purpose

This procedure outlines the processes for independent review of research progress and confirmation of higher degree research candidatures.

Scope

This procedure applies to all higher degree research (HDR) candidates, their supervisors, and people in roles responsible for management of higher degree research. The relevant [Conditions for Award Policy](#) should be read in conjunction with this procedure.

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Introduction

UNSW is committed to supporting higher degree research (HDR) candidates in the timely completion of their studies. Undergoing regular Research Progress Reviews is a critical part of this support. Reviews are intended to be a positive and productive process and provide HDR candidates with:

- An affirmation of progress, where satisfactory progress has been achieved.
- Support in developing a research plan and milestones for the period up to the next Review.
- An opportunity to have the research and supervision arrangements reviewed by a panel that is independent of the supervision and the conduct of the research project; and
- A safe environment in which a candidate can raise any issues they feel are impacting on research progress.

1. Using milestones to manage progress

All enrolled candidates must have a current research plan that includes short, medium, and long-term goals. From that plan, a set of milestones are developed to use for recording progress towards achieving those goals.

It is expected that the candidate and their supervisors will work together to develop achievable milestones, which are time bound and allow the goals to be achieved. It is important when setting new milestones to reflect on the time taken to achieve the previous milestones, so that the candidate and supervisors can learn together how long tasks really take, thereby improving the development of achievable milestones.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. HDR candidates

For the Research Progress Review process to be successful, it is important that HDR candidates take a proactive role. Candidates should consider the review as an opportunity to highlight the successes they have had, and to reflect on issues that may have impacted on their progress towards a timely submission. HDR candidates are responsible for:

- Ensuring their Research Progress Review documentation is completed on time and according to instructions provided.
- Providing a viable and constructive research plan conducive to generating milestones as described in Section 1.
- Proposing milestones to achieve their goals.
- Declaring any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest in relation to their Review.
- Disclosing relevant information related to their progress such as
 - Personal matters (health, financial);
 - Issues relating to supervision;
 - Research related challenges;
 - External factors such as impacts from global events.

If a candidate is not comfortable raising these issues in a Review, or if independent support is required for other reasons, candidates are encouraged to access appropriate support services to provide evidence of issues that may have affected progress (see Section 3.2).

2.2. Supervisors

Primary supervisors are responsible for:

- Ensuring candidates are prepared for the review process by discussing the research plan and helping to set appropriate milestones.
- Providing formal advice on progress of the candidature to the Postgraduate Coordinator (PGC) via the UNSW Review process.
- Completing their sections of the Progress Review Form as instructed and engaging proactively in the Review process.
- Consulting, and recording where relevant, the views of joint, secondary, and external supervisors about their views on the progress of the candidate and encouraging them to attend the Review.

2.3. Review panel

The Review panel, led by the chair, is responsible for:

- Working proactively with the candidate and supervisors to ensure that set milestones are appropriate and achievable in the time frame proposed.
- Ensuring that the candidate, supervisors and School use the GRIS system to accurately and appropriately detail the review process and upload any documentation.
- Confirming that the milestones set in the previous enrolment period were:
 - Achieved – the milestone was completed in full by the set due date.
 - Not Achieved – the milestone was not completed.

- Not Applicable – it was not possible to achieve the milestone due to unforeseen events (including program leave, change in research direction or changes in supervision).
- Providing strong written justification of the review outcome (satisfactory, marginal, unsatisfactory). Where milestones are recorded as 'not achieved' or 'not applicable' and the outcome has been recorded as satisfactory, further justification should be provided.
- Recommending to the Dean of Graduate Research whether the candidate's progress should be found satisfactory.
- Ensuring reviews are submitted within an appropriate timeframe, ideally one week.

2.4. Postgraduate Research Coordinator (PGC)

The PGC is responsible for:

- Coordinating all formal Research Progress Reviews as outlined in the Roles and Responsibilities of Postgraduate [Research Coordinators Guideline](#);
- Providing appropriate discipline-specific guidance to candidates on the Review process and documentation required to support the Review;
- Ensuring that appropriate milestones are set and documented on the Progress Review Form.
- Ensuring that the panel chair submits their recommended review outcome within one week of the review being held.

2.5. Dean of Graduate Research

The Dean of Graduate Research is responsible for:

- Deciding whether a HDR candidate's progress is satisfactory.
- Discontinuing candidature for any HDR candidate who has displayed unsatisfactory progress, failed to re-enrol or is absent without approved leave.
- Approving a HDR candidate's transfer to a different program.

3. Making Progress Reviews a positive process

Where progress is assessed as marginal or unsatisfactory, the most important roles of the panel are to:

- Determine the key factors that have impacted on research progress.
- Provide advice to the candidate on how they may address these factors and how they might overcome any issues raised in the review, including issues with supervision.
- Provide advice as to the forms of support available.
- Facilitate development of a plan with the candidate and supervisor to assist the candidate in achieving satisfactory progress of the research by the time of the next review.
- Recommend the candidate be asked to Show Cause if previous remedial action following unsatisfactory outcomes has been unsuccessful.

3.1. Non research related issues

Where non research related issues are considered to have impacted progress, candidates should be advised to seek appropriate support such as that outlined in Section 3.2.

Candidates may be advised to transfer from full-time enrolment to part-time enrolment or to apply for leave if personal issues are protracted. This will allow time for management of the non-research related issues and can minimise the impact on their research candidature. HDR Scholarship holders may be required to relinquish their scholarships in line with the [Higher Degree Research Scholarships Procedure](#).

3.2. Resources and support services

A range of resources and support services are available for all candidates at UNSW:

- The Faculty or School in which the candidate is enrolled can provide specific details of how policy and procedures are implemented. The PGC, supervisors, Director of Postgraduate Research/Associate Dean Research Training can provide specific advice and guidance.
- The Graduate Research School (GRS) has Faculty-specific Candidature Management Officers, who can provide information on policies and procedures as applicable across the University. The Manager, HDR Candidature is also available for all candidates to provide advice. The Director of the GRS or the Dean of Graduate Research can assist candidates following a referral by the Manager, HDR Candidature.
- The University offers a variety of support services for UNSW students, including Psychology and Wellness Services, Equitable Learning Services, Educational Support Advisors and the Learning Centre, who can provide support and skills development. The [HDR Hub](#) website provides links to all these services.
- The Conduct and Integrity Office is available for advice relating to your candidature or any concerns you may have regarding research integrity and the responsible conduct of research. You can also obtain advice on research integrity from your Faculty Research Integrity Advisors.
- For independent advice including legal advice and advocacy, candidates should contact the student organisation Arc@UNSW.
- Consult the [Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Candidates Guideline](#) for more information.

4. Timing of Research Progress reviews

4.1. Frequency of reviews

All full-time and part-time HDR candidates must have their research progress reviewed by an independent panel at least once per calendar year of enrolment. Re-enrolment in each year of an HDR program up to the maximum time for the degree is conditional upon undergoing a Review within the year.

4.2. Part-time candidates

While all candidates must be reviewed once per calendar year, progress is evaluated based on full-time equivalent (FTE) time periods for part-time candidates. In cases where part-time candidates have received a marginal or unsatisfactory outcome, the follow-up Review would be held within 6 months (i.e., 3 months FTE).

4.3. Candidates and program leave

Where program leave impacts the achievement of established milestones, the Review panel should adjust the milestone due dates and/or determine whether the milestones are still appropriate.

In circumstances where a candidate is going on approved program leave and a Review is due to be held, a Review should take place immediately prior to the period of leave to ensure that progress to date is appropriately documented and to ensure any issues can be identified. If it cannot be held prior to leave being taken, a Review must be scheduled within three months of return to study but no earlier than one month after the candidate's return.

4.4. Failure to attend review

A candidate will be asked to Show Cause if they do not attend a scheduled Research Progress Review. The details for Show Cause are outlined in the [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#).

5. Review Panel composition

All Research Progress Reviews have the same Panel composition requirements. Each candidate will have a Review panel ("the panel") appointed by the PGC, to conduct the Review. The panel must be able to provide an independent and objective assessment of the candidate's research progress. The candidate and supervisor should be informed of the panel membership prior to the Review.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion principles should be considered when appointing panels.

5.1. Membership, qualifications, and experience

- The panel should be composed of at least two members.
- Panel members should be qualified at least at the qualification level or equivalent in which the candidate is enrolled.
- Panel representation should include qualifications and experience in a cognate discipline, or relevant disciplines where interdisciplinary research is being conducted.
- The panel must include:
 - A panel chair who is either the PGC or a member of academic staff who is eligible to be a primary supervisor or has an equivalent conjoint appointment, and has had significant experience in supervision of higher degree research candidates to completion, and
 - At least one other member who holds an appointment at UNSW academic level B or higher.
- The panel must not include:
 - More than one member who is an early career researcher who has limited supervisory experience.
 - More than one member external to UNSW.
- The same panel members should be maintained for Reviews of a candidate throughout their candidature wherever possible. Exceptions to this may occur where there is potential for perceived or actual panel bias such as when there has been an appeal of a Progress Review outcome.

5.2. Freedom from conflict of interest

- Panel members should be free from actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest in relation to the candidature or candidate. If there is any doubt over conflicts of interest, the chair should seek advice from either the Faculty Associate Dean of Research Training (or equivalent) or a Research Integrity Advisor.
- Where the candidate is enrolled in an Industry PhD program or will be conducting an Industry Internship during the candidature, the supervisor and panel members should declare any potential conflict of interest related to the industry partner to the Panel Chair.
- The panel must not include:
 - The supervisor, joint supervisor, secondary supervisor, or any member of a supervisory panel during the entire candidature.
 - Academics that are supervised by members of the supervisory team.
 - Academics that are active research collaborators with the members of the supervisory team.
- If the PGC is a supervisor of the candidate, they must not be involved in management of the Review process.

5.3. Concerns regarding panel composition

- In circumstances where there is potential for perceived or actual bias, candidates may raise concerns to the PGC or Head of School, and if considered appropriate, a change made to the panel composition.
- Any issues regarding the panel composition including reasons for objections to the composition must be raised with the PGC (or Head of School) prior to the Review and must be submitted in writing with sufficient evidence.
- The PGC (or Head of School) is responsible for determining whether there is justification for exclusion or inclusion of specific members and whether to continue with the Review or reconstitute a panel in the near future.

6. Conduct of a Research Progress Review

The PGC will set a Review date and ensure the online Progress Review Form is available to the candidate. Review guidelines that are specific to Faculty/School should be provided to candidates during Faculty/School induction at the commencement of candidature, and before the Review is held.

The candidate and supervisors must meet with the Review panel independently so that both parties can discuss any issues confidentially. After these independent discussions, the candidate and the supervisors must meet with the panel together to discuss issues raised and to finalise and agree on the milestones for the next Review.

6.1. Attendance

Attendance at a Review can be held either face to face or via videoconference (Zoom/Teams). For virtual meetings, if serious technical issues that impact the viability of the Review process arise during the meeting the meeting should be stopped and re-scheduled for a later time. Any minor technical issues should be documented by the panel if necessary. Candidates may request that they have a support person attend the Review. It is expected that this person would be in an observer's role, but the panel may request their input if required.

6.2. Documentation of Reviews

Formal documentation of a Review, including completed Review forms, attachments, and outcomes will be recorded on GRIS. Any plans for remedial action that are not included on the Review form should be clearly communicated in writing by the PGC to the candidate and the supervisors, with a copy provided to GRS to place on the candidate's record.

6.3. Milestone setting

As outlined in Section 1, all enrolled candidates must have a current research plan that includes short, medium and long-term goals. From that plan, a set of milestones for the period ahead will be derived. Completion of these milestones is then used to track the candidate's progress towards the goals of the research plan.

The Review process is designed to assess a candidate's progress against milestones set during the previous enrolment period; to learn from the progress against those milestones; and to set appropriately updated milestones for the coming enrolment period. This process should also result in an updated research plan with its own updated short, medium and long-term goals.

- **Initial candidature milestones**

Supervisors must discuss milestones for the initial Progress Review period with candidates in the first three months of enrolment. For Doctoral candidates this should include the requirements for Confirmation of Candidature.

- Any additional milestones required by the School or Supervisor must be made clear to the candidate.
- Where a candidate is required to participate in a Review prior to Confirmation (see Section 8.1 below), the School must make the reasons for the Review clear to the candidate.
- All mandatory UNSW milestones must be achieved to have candidature confirmed.

- **Confirmation of candidature milestones**

All Doctoral candidates are required to complete the following milestones to achieve Confirmation of Candidature:

- Evidence that a well written and critical review of the research area (typically a literature review) has been drafted to the standard expected of a Doctoral degree and is appropriate to the discipline.
- An established, feasible, and detailed research proposal to the standard expected of a Doctoral degree.
- Evidence that all mandatory training activities have been completed.
- Evidence that any Faculty/School specific confirmation requirements have been met such as mandatory coursework.

- **Subsequent candidature milestones**

Candidates and supervisors must keep records of the agreed milestones throughout the candidature. In Research Progress Reviews, candidates should provide:

- An outline of achievements against agreed milestones;
- An outline of key milestones to be met by the next Review; and

- A timeline and updated research plan for completion of the thesis.
- **Review panel**
In all Reviews, regardless of the outcome, the panel, together with the candidate and the supervisor(s), must set milestones for the next Review, and these will be used to assess progress in the program. If appropriate milestones are not set, the PGC must return the Review form to the panel for revision. The panel should ensure that:
 - The candidate and the supervisors are actively involved in the process of setting milestones.
 - Milestones are developed which are realistic and achievable in the timeframe provided.
 - Milestones are agreed by the candidate and the supervisors, with specific dates by which they should be achieved.
 - The candidate is given appropriate time to achieve the milestones.

6.4. Consideration of mitigating circumstances

All Reviews should consider any mitigating circumstances raised by the candidate or supervisor(s) and ensure that they are proactively and sensitively managed to ensure that the health and wellbeing of the candidate is prioritised. This can be managed using the milestone setting process.

- **Management plan**
In certain circumstances, the standard Review process may not be sufficient to support a candidate's progress. It may be acknowledged that the candidature cannot be completed in the maximum time allowed for the degree.

In such cases, a formal management plan would need to be developed. The management plan is intended to be a positive intervention that acknowledges and makes adjustments for a candidate's unique circumstances that cannot be managed by existing policy mechanisms (such as program leave, part-time enrolment or medical leave).

Equitable Learning Services (ELS) can provide support to candidates with ongoing health conditions which impact their research. This service can also provide advice to PGCs and supervisors about the types of adjustments that may be required to allow the candidate to progress successfully in their research program.

The management plan should clearly define the issue that needs to be managed and outline a pathway to completion that includes feasible timelines and milestones. The plan should identify appropriate support and monitoring processes that will assist with implementing the plan, which may include more frequent, or potentially less frequent Reviews. The management plan must be developed in consultation with the candidate, supervisors, the PGC and ADRT and relevant student support services (such as ELS). Final approval is required from the Dean of Graduate Research or delegate. A copy of the management plan must be uploaded as part of the Review record.

7. Components of the Research Progress Review

7.1. Progress Review form

The Progress Review form is completed online using GRIS. The candidate must complete the form as requested by the panel/School. This should be discussed with the supervisor/s prior to completion. Ideally the candidate should complete their section of the form 14 days prior to the scheduled Review date.

The supervisor should also complete the form, ensuring that they consult with the other members of the supervisory team so that their feedback is reflected. The candidate and supervisor should include specific reference to any changes in the research plans that may have changed the previously agreed milestones.

7.2. Issues impeding progress

It is important that any personal, technical, academic or other issues considered to have impeded progress are raised by the candidate and/or supervisor on the form. If the candidate or the supervisor has concerns about the supervisory relationship, this should be raised immediately with the PGC prior to completion of the form.

7.3. Additional documentation

Documentation and material presented in oral presentations (see Section 7.4) must incorporate sufficient detail to allow the panel to assess the research and its progress. Any material required as part of the milestones agreed at the previous Research Progress Review must be provided. All documentation must be provided in sufficient time to be fully reviewed by the panel.

In addition to evidence of meeting any Faculty/School specific requirements, the candidate should provide:

- An outline of achievements for the past 12 months against agreed objectives/criteria and milestones.
- A copy of the oral presentation slides.
- For Confirmation Review, evidence that confirmation milestones have been met (see Section 6.3).
- Confirmation that all mandatory UNSW training requirements have been completed.
- An outline of key objectives/criteria and milestones for the next 12 months, and beyond.
- A timeline and milestones for completion of the thesis.
- If the candidate plans on submitting within the next 12 months, a table of contents for the thesis together with the completion status of each section.

7.4. Oral presentation

An oral presentation on the research must be given. This can be a presentation directly to the panel or it could be an open presentation to the School. Time must also be devoted to questions from the panel and, where relevant, the audience.

7.5. Panel review meeting

A panel review meeting must be held during which the candidate is given an opportunity to meet with the Review panel alone, in the absence of the supervisors. The expectation is that supervisors will also be available for the panel to interview.

8. Research Progress Reviews for candidates within the maximum time for their degree

The maximum time for the degree is 4 years (FTE) for Doctoral programs and 2 years (FTE) for Masters programs (including MPhil). The type of Review held for candidates who are within the maximum time is dependent on the stage of candidature. There are two types of Reviews as follows:

8.1. Confirmation review for Doctoral candidates

A Confirmation Review is required for all Doctoral candidates prior to the end of their first year of candidature (FTE). Confirmation is not required for Masters candidates unless they wish to apply for admission to a Doctoral program (for details see [Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure](#)).

- **Timing of Confirmation Review**

The Confirmation Review should be scheduled approximately 0.75 FTE from the start date of the term in which the candidate commenced, and no later than 1 year FTE. EFTSL.

If a candidate does not achieve Confirmation of Candidature at the first attempt, the candidate will receive a Marginal or Unsatisfactory outcome. The confirmation period may be extended to fifteen months for full-time PhD candidates or thirty months for part-time candidates to allow enough time for a follow up Review to be held.

Where confirmation of candidature cannot be completed within 1.25 FTE, the candidate may be asked to Show Cause as detailed in Section 2 of the [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#).

- **Pre-Confirmation Review for Part-Time candidates**

For any candidate enrolled part-time, the first Progress Review would typically be held at approximately 9 months of enrolment and would be considered a “regular” Research Progress Review. Appropriate milestones should be clearly discussed with the supervisor prior to the review, as per Section 6.3.

Where the candidate has met agreed milestones, the outcome should be recorded as “satisfactory prior to Confirmation”. The candidate will still be required to meet compulsory Confirmation milestones (detailed in Section 6.4).

8.2. Confirmation Review outcomes

- **Satisfactory**

A Satisfactory outcome indicates that the candidature is formally confirmed. The candidature is permitted to continue, and a new set of milestones must be provided for the next scheduled Review. This recommendation confirms the following:

- The research is appropriate for a Doctoral program;
- The candidate has demonstrated their capacity to undertake research at the Doctoral level;
- The candidate has successfully completed all mandatory requirements for Confirmation; and
- The candidate is on track for on-time completion.

- **Marginal or Unsatisfactory**

A Marginal or Unsatisfactory outcome at the first Confirmation Review indicates that the requirements for Confirmation were only partially met or not met at all. It may indicate that the candidate is not suited to undertaking a Doctoral program. For the candidature to continue, the following actions must be taken:

- New milestones set that include plans to meet all Confirmation requirements, and the dates by which these should be completed.
- The Confirmation period is extended by 3 months (FTE) in order to hold a second Confirmation Review against the milestones set.
- The Confirmation period cannot be extended beyond 15 months (FTE) from initial enrolment.

Unsatisfactory/Show Cause

- This recommendation is made at the second Confirmation Review and indicates that the requirements for Confirmation as outlined in Section 6.3 have not been met. The Faculty Higher Degree Committee (HDC) will consider whether the candidate should be asked to Show Cause as to why their candidature should not be discontinued. (See [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#))

8.3. On-time Research Progress Review

All Higher Degree Research candidates must participate in a Research Progress Review in each year of candidature, whether full-time or part-time as described in Section 4.

A Research Progress Review can be scheduled supplementary to the annual Review cycle for candidates who are not progressing or have specific challenges that need independent management. This supplementary Review can be requested by the ADRT (or equivalent), PGC, supervisor or candidate. The role and conduct of this Review, including any required milestones must be made clear in writing to all parties, either via the Review form or via other documentation.

- **Satisfactory**

A Satisfactory outcome indicates that all milestones have been met to a satisfactory standard, and the degree is on track for on-time completion. New milestones must be set for the next scheduled Review that align with the research plan submitted.

- **Marginal**

A Marginal outcome indicates that the milestones were only partially met. There may be a risk of an overtime candidature. In order for the candidature to continue, the following actions must be taken:

- An additional Review held within 3 months (FTE).
- New milestones set that outline: the academic achievements expected by the time of the next Review; remedial actions to be taken that address the key factors impeding progress; and the dates by which these should be completed.
- Following a Marginal outcome, there are only two recommendations that can be made at the next Review: Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

- **Unsatisfactory**

An Unsatisfactory outcome indicates that few or none of the milestones were met. There is a high risk of an overtime candidature and/or the degree not being completed. An assessment of unsatisfactory progress is a serious academic matter that requires careful management to bring the candidature back on track for satisfactory progress and timely completion. In order for the candidature to continue, the following actions must be taken:

- An additional Review held within 3 months (FTE).
- New milestones set that outline: the academic achievements expected by the time of the next Review; remedial actions to be taken that address the key factors impeding progress; and the dates by which these should be completed.
- For the next Review, there are only two recommendations that can be made: Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory/Show Cause.

- **Unsatisfactory/Show Cause**

Following an Unsatisfactory outcome, if the Review panel finds that the research progress is still not satisfactory, the recommendation will be Unsatisfactory/Show Cause. The Faculty HDC will consider whether the candidate should be asked to Show Cause as to why their candidature should not be discontinued (See [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#)).

9. Research Progress Reviews for candidates not on track for on-time completion

Exceeding the maximum time permitted for the degree is a serious matter, with the candidate being at high risk of not completing the degree.

Candidates in their final term of on-time candidature may not be on track to submit on time. Candidates wishing to continue their candidature beyond the maximum time of the degree need to formally apply for overtime enrolment. UNSW is committed to supporting candidates to complete their program, but it is critical that the progress of candidates is carefully monitored. Reviews must be conducted at least once every 3 months (FTE) of over-time enrolment.

9.1. Overtime Enrolment request

The request for Overtime Enrolment must be submitted for consideration by the Faculty HDC, following the process detailed in Section 9 of the [Variation to Candidature Procedure](#). The candidate must seek feedback from their supervisor when submitting a request for overtime enrolment, particularly with regards to the proposed Timeline to Completion. Overtime enrolment cannot be considered unless a Progress Review has been held in the final term of enrolment (final on-time Research Progress Review).

- Candidates may request up to one year FTE of Overtime Enrolment.
- If the candidate chooses to apply for less than a one-year FTE period in their first overtime request, and subsequently requires more time, they will need to apply for further overtime enrolment through the HDC.
- The candidate, supervisor, and Review panel must agree on a detailed and realistic timeline for completion which will inform the setting of feasible milestones and assessment of the candidate's progress moving forward.

9.2. Final on time Research Progress Review

The final on-time Review must cover the following points:

- Intended submission date;
- Outline of structure of the thesis and progress to date;
- Status of supervisory review for each chapter;
- Reasons for the delay in submission; and
- Milestones for the next Review that allow progress to be assessed.

The outcome of this review can only be designated as “not on track for on-time submission” in recognition of the fact that the candidate has not been able to achieve thesis submission within the maximum time of the degree.

Where a “satisfactory” outcome is given in a final on-time review and is used for the purposes of applying for overtime enrolment, the Dean of Graduate Research may review the result and award as marginal or unsatisfactory.

9.3. Lapsed candidature where overtime process not followed

Where a candidate has not submitted their thesis nor submitted an overtime enrolment request by the term end date of the final term of enrolment, their candidature will be considered “lapsed”. Future enrolment will be conditional on meeting requirements specified in writing by the Dean of Graduate Research.

9.4. First Overtime Review

All candidates who exceed the maximum time for the degree will have received a “not on track for on-time submission” outcome in their final on-time Review. Candidates who are over-time must be Reviewed within 3 months (FTE) of their re-enrolment. To receive a satisfactory outcome at the next Review it is expected that the candidate will have achieved the milestones set by the panel at the final on time Review and be able to confirm that they are on-track to submit their thesis in accordance with the approved timeline.

- **Satisfactory Overtime Review**

A Satisfactory outcome indicates that all milestones have been met to a satisfactory standard and that the thesis is on-track for submission in accordance with the agreed timeline as submitted with the initial request for overtime enrolment. A new set of milestones must be provided leading to thesis submission by the appropriate deadline.

- **Unsatisfactory/Show Cause**

An Unsatisfactory/Show Cause recommendation indicates that the milestones from the final on-time Review have not been met and that there is high concern that the thesis will not be submitted by the appropriate deadline. The Faculty HDC will consider whether the candidate should be asked to Show Cause as to why their candidature should not be discontinued (see [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#)).

9.5. Second and Subsequent Overtime Reviews

If the candidate receives a satisfactory outcome in the first Overtime Review, it is expected that they are on-track to submit their thesis in accordance with the approved timeline. Following this, candidates will be reviewed every 3 months (up to 1 FTE overtime). Where a candidate is not meeting stated milestones, they will receive a marginal/unsatisfactory Review, and if followed by an unsatisfactory Review, they will be asked to Show Cause.

9.6. Show Cause at 1.0 FTE overtime

Where a candidate has not been able to submit the thesis by the end of 1.0 Year FTE of Overtime Enrolment, the candidate will be asked to Show Cause (see [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#)).

10. Research Progress Reviews for candidates required to revise and resubmit thesis

In the thesis examination process, some candidates will be asked to revise and resubmit their thesis for re-examination. Candidates returning to enrolment for the purposes of revising and resubmitting their thesis must produce a detailed timeline to completion, identifying the number of terms of enrolment required. Candidates and supervisors must meet within the first month of re-enrolment to set milestones in alignment with the research plan. Documented milestones must be sent to the PGC and GRS for record keeping.

- Progress of their revisions must be monitored via a RPR conducted every two terms of enrolment (regardless of full-time or part-time).
- The conduct of the Review and the Review outcomes should be the same as detailed in Section 9.5, except that where an unsatisfactory follows a marginal/unsatisfactory the consequence of a unsatisfactory response to Show Cause will be a thesis outcome of Not Award.

11. Appeals and complaints

A candidate can appeal a Review recommendation or any recommended actions on grounds of procedural fairness where it can be demonstrated that the terms of this procedure, or relevant elements of the UNSW HDR Policy Framework, have not been followed, or have been applied inconsistently.

The candidate must have the opportunity to make a written submission to the Faculty HDC.

11.1. Documentation

Documentation outlining the subject of the appeal and any supporting evidence must be submitted to the School PGC within 10 working days of the Review recommendation being published. If there is a conflict of interest or other issue (e.g. if the PGC is the panel chair), the candidate may submit documents to the Faculty HDC via the appropriate Faculty ADRT (or equivalent) or via the GRS.

Examples of the types of issues that a candidate may wish to raise in an appeal document may include:

- A conflict of interest on the part of the panel;
- A failure on the part of the panel to consider all of the issues raised by the candidate; and/or
- A failure on the part of the panel to measure progress against the agreed milestones.

11.2. Committee review

The Committee will consider the appeal by the candidate. The Committee Chair will advise the candidate whether the appeal has been upheld. The Committee's notification should outline appropriate actions resulting from the appeal outcome.

If an appeal is not upheld, candidates have the right to submit a complaint to the Dean of Graduate Research according to the [Complaints Management and Investigation Policy and Procedure](#).

12. Show Cause as to why candidature should not be discontinued

The Show Cause recommendation is a serious outcome and provides the candidate with a final opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to complete the degree. An inadequate response to a Show Cause request may result in Dean of Graduate Research deciding to discontinue the candidature. The [Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline](#) should be consulted for more information.

13. Transfer a different HDR program from a Doctoral program

If at any Review, the supervisor or the panel recommend transferring to a different HDR program from a Doctoral degree, the candidate should be informed in writing of the reasons for this recommendation.

If the transfer recommendation is accepted by the candidate, program transfer should be requested via the [Variation of Candidature Procedure](#). The request will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Research for approval.

14. Managing issues relating to supervision

Research candidates may feel reluctant to raise issues relating to their supervision during a formal Review. As outlined in Section 7.5 of this procedure, it is critical that all candidates are given the opportunity to meet with the panel alone and to raise any issues in the absence of the supervisors.

If the panel is alerted to a potential dispute or breakdown in the relationship between the candidate and the supervisor, both the candidate and the supervisor should be given the opportunity to meet with the panel separately to discuss the relevant issues. The panel should discuss any concerns with the School PGC.

14.1. Supervisory team changes

If during a Review a change in supervision arrangements is signalled, the [HDR Supervision Policy and Procedure](#) and the [Variation of Candidature Procedure](#) should be followed.

14.2. Referral of issues relating to supervision

If the panel or PGC does not feel comfortable with managing the issues raised, the candidate should be formally referred to an appropriate authority such as the Head of School, the Associate Dean Research Training or equivalent, or the Dean of Graduate Research.

Version: 3.2

Effective: 19 March 2025

Responsible: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training) and Dean of Graduate Research

Lead: Director, Graduate Research School

Appendix

Legislative compliance

1. This Procedure supports the University's compliance with the following legislation:
 - 1.1. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

Related documents

- [Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Complaints Management and Investigation Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy](#)
- [Conditions for Award of Master by Research Policy](#)
- [Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy](#)
- [Conditions for Award of Professional Doctorates Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management Policy](#)
- [Delegations Policy](#)
- [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#)
- [Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure](#)
- Roles and Responsibilities of Postgraduate Research Coordinators Guideline
- Show Cause for Research Candidates Guideline
- [Variation of Candidature Procedure](#)

Definitions and Acronyms	
Research Progress Review	These are formal, independent Reviews that are conducted according to these University procedures. They include Annual Research Progress Reviews, Confirmation Reviews, and Overtime Reviews. Reviews are not intended to replace regular meetings and evaluations of progress that supervisors normally conduct.
Confirmation of Candidature	This is the result of a formal Review that is conducted within the first year (FTE) of a Doctoral program. Confirmation indicates that the research candidate has demonstrated to an independent panel that they have developed a feasible research program appropriate for Doctoral level qualification.
Show Cause	A candidate may be asked to Show Cause as to why their candidature should not be discontinued in cases where there has been sustained unsatisfactory research progress. Show Cause is a process that provides an opportunity for the candidate to raise any issues that may have affected progress. These may include but are not limited to personal, technical and academic issues. Candidates may also be asked to Show Cause in cases of lapsed candidatures.
PGC	Postgraduate Research Coordinator
GRS	Graduate Research School
ARPR	Annual Research Progress Review
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy

EFTSL	Equivalent full-time study load is a measure of study load for one year on a normal full-time basis. At UNSW 1 EFTSL is defined as 48 units of credit which for HDR candidates is 48 full-time weeks of study in a year.
HDR	Higher Degree Research
RI	UNSW Research Integrity online training module
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
Faculty HDC/The Committee	Faculty Higher Degree Committee
ADRT (or equivalent)	Faculty Associate Dean of Research Training or Director of Postgraduate Research

Version History

- **Version 1.0** approved by Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) on 23 October 2012 effective 23 October 2012. Revision, reformat using Governance templates, superseded a GRS Local Document approved on 25 August 2009.
- **Version 2.0** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research on 9 October 2017 effective 9 October 2017. Full review.
- **Version 2.1** approved by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research on 13 December 2018 effective 13 December 2018. Minor amendment.
- **Version 3.0** approved Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise on 29 March 2023. Full review.
- **Version 3.1** approved by Director of Governance on 1 August 2024 effective 6 August 2024. Administrative update removing outdated titles, links and references to policy.
- **Version 3.2** approved by Director of Governance on 19 March 2025, effective 19 March 2025. Administrative update to align with UNSW Delegations.