

Procedure: Higher Degree by Research - Admissions

Purpose

To provide an overview of eligibility and selection of candidates for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs at The Australian National University (**University**). This provides a clear statement of the University's HDR admissions procedure to support a transparent application and admissions process.

This document outlines the process for applying for admission to an HDR program and the assessment of an application for admission.

- * This Procedure should be read in conjunction with the [Research Awards Rule](#), the Policy: Higher degree by research Admissions, the Policy: Higher degree by research Scholarships, the [Policy: English language admission requirements and post-admission support](#), the [Procedure: Student sanctions](#) and the [Procedure: Case for English language equivalency](#).

Definitions

As defined in [Policy: Higher Degree by Research- Admissions](#).

Procedure

Eligibility and Selection

1. Applicants are assessed in accordance with the admissions requirements set out in the Research Awards Rule, the University's English language requirements, the Programs and Courses website, and other documented additional admission requirements set in place by the Colleges.
2. The minimum academic entry requirements are specified in the Research Awards Rule.
3. Admission is also subject to limits on places, the availability of appropriate supervision and the resources required to support candidates as specified in rule 15 of the Research Awards Rule and the Guideline: Minimum allocation of resources for Higher degree by research candidates.

4. The University reserves the right to admit or deny admission to applicants in accordance with rules 17, 18, 19 and 20 of the Research Awards Rule 2021.
5. Professional experience
6. A Delegated Authority may approve admission when a combination of qualifications and professional experience are deemed to be equal or superior to academic qualifications as set out in the minimum entry requirements for higher degree programs.
7. Professional experience may include but is not limited to:
 - a. A prior educational qualification that contributes to the formation and development of research skills,
 - b. Scholarly paper/s published by recognised academic publishers,
 - c. A significant contribution to a research or technical report prepared for industry, business or government which follows broad requirements of academic publishing,
 - d. A portfolio of published creative works,
 - e. Prior work experience must meet the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) scale, with a minimum skill level of 2 and with a minimum duration of five (5) years' work experience or higher. Applicants must provide a statement of service for each work experience.

Application procedures

Pre-application

8. Prior to applying, prospective candidates are encouraged to review the programs, graduate research fields, and research projects advertised on the University [website](#).
9. Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact the relevant HDR Program contact listed on the [Programs and Courses website](#) and/or proposed supervisor for advice on:
 - a. Eligibility for admission to the proposed HDR program,
 - b. Drafting a research proposal in line with the requirement of the HDR program or discipline area (if applicable),
 - c. The feasibility of the proposed research proposal (if applicable),

- d. Further details on the requirements of the HDR program, such as compulsory milestones and expected timelines,
 - e. Guidance on availability of supervision for the applicant,
 - f. The availability of resources necessary to conduct the proposed research, and
 - g. Any pre-application processes required by the HDR program prior to submission of the formal admissions application.
10. Prior to providing pre-application advice as specified in paragraph 8, a HDR convenor, professional staff member, or proposed supervisor may require the prospective candidate to provide documents which could include copies of their academic qualifications, CV, and an example of research works.
11. The HDR convenor, proposed supervisor, or relevant professional staff members can provide advice on the admissions process.

Authorised University agents

12. The University may require applicants to apply through an authorised agent in accordance with the Policy: HDR Admissions.
13. A current list of authorised agents can be accessed via the [University Study website](#).

Application

14. Prospective candidates can commence their applications via the 'Apply' tab which is linked to the StudyLink application portal.
15. Only one program preference may be listed on an application, however prospective candidates may also select the option to be considered for an MPhil (where available) if unsuccessful for a PhD.
16. Prospective candidates must disclose details about any exclusions or suspensions from a Higher Education Institution in their application.
17. A prospective candidate who has been the subject of an exclusion or suspension must include a statement of changed circumstances in support of their application.

Admit terms for commencement

18. Applicants indicate their preferred admit term, either Semester 1 or Semester 2. These coincide with a week-long cohort induction program and with coursework commencements.

19. Where coursework is a part of the HDR program, commencement in either Semester 1 or 2 must align with coursework timetables and will be advised in the admission offer.
20. A Delegated Authority may allow a prospective candidate to commence outside of the standard admit terms in line with externally funded research project commencement dates, or other exceptional circumstances.

Application deadlines

21. There are no application deadlines, however applicants wishing to be considered for ANU scholarships must submit their applications for admission accordingly (see paras 21-23 of this Procedure).

Scholarship applications

22. A separate scholarship application form is not required for the [ANU central HDR scholarship rounds](#), which include the [Research Training Program \(RTP\)](#), [University Research Scholarship \(URS\)](#), [Indigenous Australian Graduate Scholarship \(IAGS\)](#), [Indigenous Australian Reconciliation PhD Scholarship \(IARS\)](#), [ANU PhD Re-entry Scholarship](#), [Gwendolyn Woodroffe](#) and [Kathleen Woodroffe Scholarships](#).
23. Applicants who want to be considered for other scholarships in the ANU Colleges competitive ranking process must select the relevant option in the application form.
24. Where a University administered scholarship has specific requirements, such as a particular application form or a separate deadline for application, applicants must fulfill these requirements. Applicants can search scholarship opportunities available to HDR candidates on the [ANU Scholarships website](#).

Application Fee

25. There is no fee for applications for admission to HDR programs.

Documents for inclusion with applications

26. Academic documents:
 - a. Clear, unaltered, colour scans of original academic transcripts, completion certificates or testamurs for all tertiary qualifications completed or attempted must be submitted.
 - b. Certification of documents is not required. A separate audit process is undertaken to verify the authenticity of academic documents presented at application. When

submitting their application, applicants agree to allow the University to contact previous institutions and verify their academic credentials, as part of the audit.

- c. If supporting documents are in a language other than English, translations must be provided in addition to the original language documents, in accordance with the University's [guidelines for translations](#). Translations provided by the issuer of the academic document and/or a government authority in the applicant's home country is also acceptable.
- d. If a qualification is still being completed at the time of application, applicants must advise of the expected date of completion and provide a recent academic transcript.

27. Research proposal

- a. Each HDR program may have specific requirements for the content and format of a research proposal. Applicants may seek guidance from the relevant College HDR convenor or their proposed supervisor on any specific requirements, templates, expected length, or content of the proposal.
- b. Examples of previous research work, including published papers, or a thesis from prior studies, and/or a portfolio of creative works, if available should also be included in the application.

28. Referee reports

- a. Referee reports are mandatory when applying for admission to a HDR program. These are confidential, and can be academic or professional in nature.
- b. Applicants will be asked to provide the names, positions and email addresses of at least two (2) referees who can comment on the applicant's ability to undertake the proposed research program. The University will request the referee report directly from the nominated referee. The University cannot accept a referee report directly provided by the applicant.
- c. The University may request additional referee reports during the assessment of an application.
- d. If a referee is also the applicant's proposed University supervisor, an additional referee is required.

29. Curriculum vitae (CV) or resume

30. Evidence of English language proficiency as specified in the University's [Policy: English language admission requirements and post-admission support](#).

Dishonest, False or misleading information

31. Dishonest, false, or misleading information in an application or documentation supplied in an application for admission will be actioned according to the Discipline Rule 2021 which may amount to an inquiry into misconduct.

Academic integrity breach

32. If a University staff member identifies a potential breach of academic integrity principles, they must report the instance for investigation in accordance with the University's [Academic Integrity Rule 2021](#).
33. Candidates currently enrolled in a HDR program at another institution who wish to transfer their research project to ANU should follow the same steps as applicants applying for admission to a research program for the first time.
34. Candidates seeking a transfer must declare any issues concerning lack of progress or dispute at the other institution.
35. Program/Research project transfers will not be considered if:
- a. There is an unexplained lack of progress or dispute at the other institution, and the University is not satisfied with the explanation and/or there is insufficient material provided to explain it.
 - b. The applicant is within 12 months of completion at the other institution, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
 - c. It is in breach of the [ESOS Act National Code](#) that states that an international prospective candidate on a student visa may not transfer from another Australian registered provider's course before completing six months of that principal course of study unless an exception applies.

Change of name

36. Official evidence of a name change must be submitted where a qualification presented in an application is different to the name used in the application.

Academic load

37. Domestic applicants may elect to enrol in their program on a part-time basis (50%) or a full-time basis (100%).
38. Applicants should refer to their scholarship's Conditions of Award eligibility requirements, including (but not limited to) academic load.

39. International applicants on a student visa are expected to study full-time in accordance with the conditions of their visa.
40. International applicants on a visa other than a student visa are expected to select an enrolment load that satisfies their visa requirements.

Enrolment as an external candidate

41. A candidate enrolled in a program for a research award must undertake the program at a campus of the University.
42. If a prospective candidate intends to apply as an external candidate they should indicate their intention to do so on the application for admission, and include details such as the intended duration for their external status. The prospective candidate must also complete the process to be an external candidate on the [Guidelines to change to external status page](#).
43. Upon written request by the candidate, a Delegated Authority may give written approval for the candidate to undertake all or part of the program outside the University as an external candidate, subject to any applicable student sanctions in paragraphs 68-71 of this Procedure.
44. A Delegated Authority will take into consideration factors including availability of supervisor, access to resources required to undertake the research, coursework, progression of milestones to date or other requirements.
45. Any coursework proposed to be undertaken at another tertiary education institution as part of the program must be substantially comparable in quality to equivalent coursework offered by the University (refer to [Procedure: Higher Degree by Research – Candidature](#)).

Credit for prior study

46. Status/credit for prior study is granted at the discretion of the relevant Delegated Authority of the ANU College, and decided after enrolment is finalised.

Outcomes of admission application

47. An application consists of:
 - a. The completed application form submitted online by the applicant;
 - b. All required supporting documentation; and
 - c. Two referee reports.

48. The outcome of a completed application is either an offer of admission (full offer or conditional offer) or a letter advising of an unsuccessful application.
49. Outcomes are sent to applicants by email by the Registrar, Student Administration & Academic Services. No other communications are considered outcomes of admission application, including a verbal communication, informal emails or offers or places within a program from any other University staff member.
50. Colleges may, in their absolute discretion, allow the applicant an opportunity to submit missing documentation, to an incomplete application. If the application is incomplete beyond the deadline set by the College, the application is invalid and therefore will not receive an outcome.

Offer of Admission

51. Formal offers of admission will include the program name, ANU College, Research School or Centre, admit term, tuition or other fees, approved academic load, offer expiry date and instructions for acceptance.
52. Offers may be conditional or unconditional.
53. Conditional offers must include details of the conditions to be met before admission and subsequent enrolment can be finalised.
54. Conditions may include completing a current academic qualification, withdrawing from another program or meeting the University's English language requirements.

Revised offers

55. A conditional offer of admission may be revised when condition(s) attached to the offer are met.
56. A new revised offer letter may be conditional (if there are conditions still to be met, or unconditional. This is a formal document sent by email and signed by the Registrar, Student Administration & Academic Services.

Change of Admit Term

57. Applicants can request to change the admit term on their offer of admission.
58. A Delegated Authority may approve a request to change an offer of admission admit term.
59. When approving a request to change the admit term, a Delegated Authority must be satisfied that the School has confirmed that it has appropriate space, resources, and supervision for the later commencement date.

60. If a change of admit term request is approved a new letter signed by the Registrar will be emailed containing the new admit term. This may require reverification of eligibility requirements, including English language requirements.
61. An applicant may apply to change an admit term up to 12 months from the date of the first admit term approved for admission.
62. An offer lapses at the end of a new admit term. Following this, an applicant must reapply for admission.
63. An applicant who is granted a change of admit term will be liable for tuition or other fees at the rate applicable to the year of enrolment.

Expiry of offers

64. The offer expiry date will be included in the formal offer of admission and is set as the last day of the admit term offered for commencement in the HDR program.
65. Offers of admission will expire if not taken up by the expiry date set out in the letter of offer (see Acceptance Process, paragraphs 63-67).

Withdrawal of offers

66. The University reserves the right to withdraw an offer where the offer
 - a. is defective due to administrative error or made in error; or
 - b. has been made on the basis of incomplete or inaccurate information; and/or
 - c. has been made on the basis of dishonest, false or misleading information contained In the application.
67. If the University withdraws an offer the applicant will be notified in writing by the Registrar.

Denial of admission

68. Selection to a University program is made on a competitive basis. Solely meeting eligibility criteria for admission into a program does not guarantee selection into a program.
69. Applicants with complete applications may not be offered admission on the basis that:
 - a. a Delegated Authority has determined that minimum academic qualifications or equivalency requirements are not met by the applicant;

- b. the Delegated Authority has determined that the applicant does not have sufficient research capability;
- c. the proposed research is not in line with the University's research goals;
- d. appropriate supervision is not available;
- e. research infrastructure and/or resources are not available,
- f. an applicant is deemed by the University not to meet the GTE requirements specified by the Department of Home Affairs;
- g. incomplete, inaccurate, dishonest, false or misleading information has been supplied;
- h. supporting documentation contains research that breaches academic integrity principles;
- i. if the candidate is subject to United Nations or autonomous sanctions (see paragraphs 68-71 of this Procedure) and the assessment is deemed an unacceptable risk; and/or
- j. English language requirements have not been met; and/or
- k. where an application has not supplied documentation as requested or the condition in paragraph 42 of this procedure has not been met.

Acceptance process

- 70. Instructions on acceptance of offers are included in the formal offer of admission sent to successful applicants.
- 71. Enrolment cannot be finalised until any conditions attached to the offer of admission are met, prior to acceptance of offer.

Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE) - for international applicants only

- 72. Once international applicants have accepted an unconditional offer of admission, the GRO confirms the following before issuing an eCoE document that the applicant:
 - a. Has either paid a tuition fee deposit or submitted sponsorship/scholarship information to cover tuition fees;
 - b. Overseas Health Cover (OSHC) is either paid as part of the deposit or covered by a sponsorship/scholarship; and

- c. Has provided a realistic nominated commencement date within the admit term mentioned in the offer of admission.

73. The eCoE document can then be used by the applicant to apply for a student visa.

Change of citizenship status

74. If an international candidate gains Permanent Resident status after gaining admission the candidate will:

- a. Be transferred to the domestic enrolment status and
- b. will not be liable for tuition fees for that term if this occurs before the census date in any term; or remain liable for fees at the international candidate fee rate for that term if this occurs after the census date.

Risk assessment

Sanctions

75. The [Procedure: Student Sanctions](#) sets in place procedures for undertaking risk assessments in relation to current sanctions in relation to applicants for admission to HDR Programs.

76. Applicants who are citizens of sanctioned countries are subject to additional procedures.

77. Applicants whose projects are assessed as medium or high risk may not be offered admission but, if admitted, are not permitted to be external candidates.

78. The GRO will identify applicants from sanctioned countries (as per the [DFAT website](#)) and notify the relevant College. Before an offer of admission can be made to the applicant, the College must undertake a risk assessment using the Higher Degree Research – Compliance Assessment form. The form must be endorsed by the Associate Dean, HDR, and the College Dean.

Genuine Student (GS)

79. The GS requirement is an integrity measure used by the Department of Home Affairs.

80. The University is required by the Australian Government to ensure that the GS criterion is satisfied by all applicants who make an application for a Student Visa prior to any offer of admission and subsequent provision of an eCoE.

81. The GS process for HDR applicants requires international applicants to sign a declaration that they:

- a. Are a Genuine Student and
- b. Understand that if the University forms the opinion that they are not a genuine student it may refuse to assess their application; withdraw an offer of admission (conditional or otherwise) and/or cancel enrolment.

82. The University assesses the applicant against GS requirements, as stated in the Migration Regulations 1994 500.212, 500.312, 590.215 and are guided by Ministerial Direction no. 106 as amended from time to time.

Document Verification

83. In assessing an application for admission, College or School staff members (professional and/or academic) must undertake an application and document verification check.

84. The primary purpose is to check the integrity of application documents and to protect against fraud.

85. If one or more indicators are identified when reviewing supporting documents for admission the College must escalate the application to the GRO for further investigation and verification.

86. The GRO is responsible for undertaking a document check for English Language requirements.

Audit process

87. A back-to-source audit process is conducted by the GRO using a percentage of currently enrolled HDR candidates in each admit term, typically 10% but can be varied depending on risk factors identified. Back-to-source audits are undertaken for each qualification included in the application.

88. Applicants authorise the University to:

- c. Obtaining official records from any institution the candidate has attended,
- d. Conducting any other enquiries to verify documents presented with applications including, but not limited to,
 - * evidence of English language proficiency, and/or
 - * enquiries to determine whether there is any undeclared study.

89. If the University detects fraudulent documents, the application will be denied, or if an offer has been made it will be withdrawn or enrolment cancelled.
90. An out-of-session audit is conducted by GRO for any escalated applications under para 82.
91. An audit may require the applicant to provide original documents to the GRO for verification or apply and pay for original documents to be provided to the University such as official transcripts from a previous higher education institution.

Joint and Dual degrees

92. Candidates must follow the [Policy: Joint and Dual award PhD](#) and related procedure.

Appeals

93. Applicants who are unsuccessful in their application for admission to a HDR program at the University will be provided with information in their outcome letter about the University's appeals process.
94. Applicants have 20 working days from the date of the unsuccessful outcome email to lodge an official appeal.
95. Where an appeal is received by the University, it will be considered in accordance with the rules 92-97, Research Awards Rule.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the University

96. The University will provide:
- clear, accurate and timely information and advice about the admission process;
 - a streamlined and transparent admissions process

Responsibilities of the applicant

97. Applicants must:
- Provide true and accurate information and documentation in support of their application for admission.
 - Apply for admission well in advance of scholarship deadlines to account for differing admission and scholarship timelines.

- c. Pay all tuition fees by the relevant due dates and ensure they have sufficient funds for living expenses, and to use scholarship or sponsorship funds appropriately.

Document information

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