

Guideline Title: Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Support and Professional Development

Guideline Owner: Dean, Graduate Research

This Guideline supports the University to operationalise the Research Training Policy and must be complied with.

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1. INTENT

The purpose of this Guideline is to provide an overview of the roles, responsibilities and support relating to the professional development of Candidates.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

This Guideline applies to all Staff, Candidates and Supervisors involved in any aspect of Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) including adjunct positions and emeritus professors that administer, supervise, or otherwise contribute to HDR Candidates and HDR Courses.

3. DEFINITIONS

The [University Glossary](#) and definitions in the Research Training Policy apply to this Guideline.

4. GUIDELINE CONTENT

Principles

- 4.1. Candidates will be supported throughout their candidature and research by appropriately trained and experienced individuals with capacity and expertise to provide appropriate supervision as outlined in the [HDR Supervision Guideline](#).

Candidates will be provided guidance on all aspects of their research, including research design, conduct, completion, publication and communication. However, the primary responsibility for planning, conduct and dissemination of research within a HDR course rests with the Candidate. All Candidates have the responsibility to:

- a. conduct all research and research training with integrity;
 - b. work cooperatively with Supervisors and others to establish and maintain respectful, collegiate and constructive relationships;
 - c. understand and adhere to relevant policies, procedures and other governance documents;
 - d. actively engage with appropriate professional development, training and support, in addition to completing all required training in a timely manner;
 - e. establish, participate and document regularly meetings with Supervisors to agree to expectations, milestones, actions, feedback, responsibilities, professional development and other matters important to the conduct of the research and progression in the degree; and
 - f. understand their rights and responsibilities as Candidates, including awareness of how to request a review, appeal a grade/result, resolve a dispute or make a complaint.
- 4.2. Resources and facilities to support postgraduate research are provided at numerous levels across the University. The support provided to individual Candidates will depend on a range of factors: including discipline and specific approved project requirements; availability of external funding support; location/s in which the research is being conducted and enrolment status of the Candidate.
- 4.3. The School and University will:
- a. take all reasonable steps to ensure applicants meet the minimum requirements set by the University for admission and are capable of undertaking research at a level appropriate to the Award;
 - b. ensure that procedures are in place to select the most appropriate Supervisor Panel, and ensure that each Candidate has an appropriately qualified and trained Supervisor Panel, with sufficient time allocated to members to allow for effective supervision throughout the candidature;
 - c. ensure there are adequate resources, space, facilities and development opportunities to support Candidates complete their research project and meet examination requirements;
 - d. oversee and deliver the orientation, induction and training opportunities provided at School level specifically for Candidates; and
 - e. monitor the progression of Candidates within the School, outlining the quality and progress expected at various stages of candidature within disciplines, evaluating research programs, and responding to feedback in a timely manner.
- 4.4. Prior to approving admission, the Associate Dean (Research) within the relevant School or Teaching Area must ensure that adequate supervision, facilities and resources are available to support the proposed research project. Where a project is interdisciplinary in nature and involves cross-School supervision, the provision of facilities and support must be agreed upon by all relevant Associate Deans (Research).
- 4.5. Prior to approving online/off-campus admission, the Associate Dean (Research) must ensure that agreement is reached on the provision of facilities and resources to support the Candidate and proposed research project. This must be recorded on the Off-Campus HDR Agreement. Such support includes:
- Workspace and facilities;

- Research support funding;
- Library, IT and computing services;
- Orientation, induction and information;
- Professional development opportunities; and
- Supervision.

Workspace and Facilities

- 4.6. Schools should allocate a suitable on-campus workspace for the purpose of desk-based research and writing for Candidates studying on-campus. Candidates may be expected to share workspaces. Workspaces should contain desks, chairs, bookcases, lockable filing cabinets, computers equipped with appropriate software and Internet access, and access to a printer/copier.
- 4.7. With due regard to ethics requirements, Candidates should be given access to a lockable cupboard or filing cabinet. Candidates will also have access to appropriate IT systems for data management as per their approved data management plan. Where a project may have specialised data management requirements, Candidates are encouraged to discuss this with their Principal Supervisor.
- 4.8. Where possible, the University should provide some private study spaces for Candidates engaged in research of a confidential or sensitive nature. With appropriate School approval, access to workspaces may be provided on a 24-hour basis, subject to compliance with relevant University Work Health and Safety and other policies.
- 4.9. Schools will provide Candidates access to specialised facilities, equipment and services such as laboratories, glass and shade houses, rehearsal spaces, exhibition spaces, studios, computer laboratories, boats, and vehicles, and technicians as deemed necessary based on the research project and stage of candidature.
- 4.10. On-campus Candidates will be provided with a workspace for the purpose of desk-based research and writing. Priority is given to full-time Candidates. Part-time Candidates may be expected to share a workspace, depending on vacancies. Workspace and computer support for off-campus Candidates will be coordinated upon enrolment. Requests for the provision of reasonable alternate office furnishings or accessories including stand-up desks and ergonomic chairs, will only be considered with appropriate medical support and ergonomic assessment documentation.

For more information, please contact the ECU [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Service](#). Requests for alternative office furnishings may need to be paid for by HDR funding support, are asset tracked and remain the property of ECU.

Funding Support

- 4.11. Candidates will have access to research project funding provided within the School to support some of the direct costs of their research. The funding available is differentiated based upon the Field of Education (FoE) and recognised relative costs of research training within high-cost and low-cost courses as outlined by the [Research Training Program \(RTP\) Guidelines](#). The minimum available funds to support the research are:

High-cost PhD	\$4,500
Low-cost PhD	\$3,000
High-cost Master by Research	\$2,500
Low-cost Master by Research	\$1,500

- 4.12. Schools must maintain accurate records and a running total of the amount of funding available to each of their eligible Candidates. Schools are responsible for advising their Candidates of the level of research funding support available. This advice should be supplied to Candidates at orientation and where appropriate throughout candidature.
- 4.13. University funding is provided to support the research project and Candidate, however any equipment, accessories, and software purchased for use by the Candidate will remain the property of the University and must be asset tracked. All equipment must be returned to the School once the Candidate's final thesis is submitted. Damaged, lost or stolen equipment or accessories will not necessarily be replaced or repaired, and Candidates are strongly encouraged to take all reasonable care for University equipment or accessories.

Budget

- 4.14. Candidates are required to prepare and include a draft budget in their research proposal in consultation with their Supervisor. Research projects should be budgeted within the scope of research support funding available to Candidates. If the research project requires funding, in excess of the research support funding, Candidates should indicate where the additional funds will be sourced from. Shortfalls in funding should be addressed as part of the project risk assessment and may require confirmation of funding for any shortfall.
- 4.15. Research funding may be used to support:
- Presenting at a national or international conference.
 - Opportunities to collaborate with world class institutions or industry partners.
 - Professional development or training.
 - Purchase of equipment.
 - Purchase of consumables.
 - Costs associated with data collection.
 - Office consumables.
- 4.16. Research support funds may be accessed to cover the cost of flights, conference registrations, development or training costs and accommodation. All requests for travel funding must include an approved [Student Travel Form](#). All travel must be booked through the School Administrative Officer. Candidates are required to ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are completed and approved for any travel and associated activities.
- 4.17. Expenditure processes are outlined in [Appendix 1](#).

4.18. Decisions on allowable research expenditure are made by the Associate Dean of Research. If Supervisors or Candidates are unsure, it is recommended that they discuss this with the relevant Associate Dean Research prior to any expenses being incurred. Below are examples of expenses that the funding will not support:

- Any activities unrelated to the Candidate's research.
- ECU Parking.
- Home Internet connection.
- Passport or VISAs.
- Gowns or regalia.

Requests for Funding

4.19. Candidates will typically only have access to funding after candidature has been confirmed. Where funding is sought prior to candidature confirmation, this must be endorsed in writing by the Principal Supervisor and approved by the relevant Associate Dean Research.

4.20. Applications for funding expenditure must be made in advance of expenditure and should contain detailed justification for the planned expenditure. Applications for research support funding must be endorsed by the Candidate's Principal Supervisor and submitted to the relevant School administrative support. All claims for funding should be prior to course completion. Any claims made following course completion is at the discretion of the Associate Dean Research.

4.21. Approved expenses, including travel, must be submitted for reimbursement to the relevant School administrative support officer within 30 days of purchase date, otherwise the School reserves the right to refuse reimbursement.

4.22. The expenditure of funds must be in line with standard University policies and regulations.

Library, Digital and Computer Support

4.23. Candidates should have access to consultation with a subject specialist Librarian and ongoing assistance as required; an orientation to Library services; tutorials and training on using information sources relevant to the Candidate's particular area of study; and access to information services from other libraries (negotiated agreement required), such as inter-library loans and document delivery services.

4.24. Candidates will be able to use University licensed software on University owned computers and may use some software on personal computers where the license permits. Candidates will need to confer with their Supervisors and relevant Associate Dean of Research regarding any specialised software requirements.

4.25. Candidates will be supported to meet their requirements for research data management when completing their data management plan.

4.26. Candidates will be provided with access to a desktop computer at their allocated desk, for their research and writing, which will remain ECU property. This includes one computer, one monitor, keyboard and mouse. Additional costs for any accessory items

deemed important to the research must be paid from the Candidate's research funding support (see 4.13).

Professional Development Opportunities

- 4.27. Candidates are required to proactively engage in their own professional development. This includes identifying and engaging with appropriate professional development opportunities that will facilitate completion of the degree and future employability.

Candidates and Supervisors should discuss, identify and record required professional development activities within the relevant milestones (i.e. MyPlan) and Progress Reports. The Supervisory Panel have a responsibility to support the Candidate in their professional skills development including developing a career plan, networking opportunities, and enhancing employability, as outlined in the HDR Supervisor Procedures.

- 4.28. Professional development opportunities will be regularly advertised to Candidates. Content will be provided in a range of delivery patterns that cater for the various enrolment modes of Candidates (i.e. on-campus, off-campus, joint HDR enrolments), including the use of spanned, recorded or face-to-face delivery). Schools, Research Institutes and Centres will provide regular seminars and other researcher development opportunities to Candidates. Specialist areas will provide seminars and other researcher support. This includes research and writing consultants in the Centre for Learning and Teaching and the Library.

Induction and Information

- 4.29. All Candidates must complete the relevant induction training outlined in the HDR Milestones Guidelines.
- 4.30. Schools and Teaching Areas will hold an induction for commencing Candidates which will include information on support and services, relevant Research Institutes and Centres, Work Health and Safety requirements, special discipline requirements, and School related procedures and processes relating to research Candidates.
- 4.31. Candidates will be made aware of regular updates regarding HDR programs at ECU, variations to relevant procedures or policies, research training, and professional development opportunities through newsletters, email and notifications provided by Research Services, Schools, relevant service areas and from direct contact with individual Supervisors.

Dispute Resolution

- 4.32. Any Candidate who is dissatisfied with the level of support or opportunities they are being provided are encouraged to contact a member of their Supervisor Panel. If a Candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome or have concerns with their supervision, and discussions with their Supervisors have failed, they are encouraged to meet with the Associate Dean (Research). Any problems or disagreements encountered during the candidature that cannot be resolved between the Candidate and the Supervisor with any of the above arbitrators, may be mediated by the Dean, Graduate Research.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Guideline Owner is the Dean, Graduate Research who has overall responsibility for the content of these Guidelines and their operation.

The Manager, Graduate Research Services is responsible for the currency of information and provision of advice relating to these Guidelines.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Statutes and Rules

[Admission, Enrolment, and Academic Progression Rules](#)

Policies

[Research Training](#)

[Authorised University Travel](#)

Operational documents and resources

[Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Service](#)

[Forms, Policies and Guidelines](#)

[Guideline: HDR Supervision](#)

[Guideline: HDR Milestones](#)

[Student Travel Form](#)

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Guideline Owner	Dean, Graduate Research
All Enquiries Contact	Manager, Graduate Research Services
Telephone:	6304 6971
Email address:	s.ng@ecu.edu.au

8. APPROVAL HISTORY

Guideline approved by:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Date guideline first approved:	9 May 2024
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Appendix 1

HDR Expenditure Process

Funding Support can be claimed in the following way and will depend on the purchase:

- Direct payment on ECU credit card.
- Reimbursement of expenses.

Funding Approval Process

- a. The Candidate must discuss their request for funding with their Supervisor PRIOR to any purchase being requested – this includes purchases for research and requests for travel. Supervisors will take the Candidate's budget into consideration.
- b. The Candidate emails the School Officer with details of the purchase or travel request.
- c. The School Officer checks funds available and if the request meets the appropriate use of research funds, as outlined in this document. The School Officer then provides email confirmation to the Candidate.
- d. In the confirmation email, the School Officer will proceed to facilitate the process required for purchasing or travel. The School Officer will require approval from the Supervisor in writing (email is sufficient).

Gift Cards

Any purchase of gift cards by Candidates for their research must adhere to the relevant Purchase and Use of Gift Cards Guidelines. Gift cards must be purchased by the relevant school officer and registered on the University Gift Card Register.

The provision of remuneration to participants, including in the form of Gift cards or certificates, is an ethical consideration and requires prior review and approval from the ECUs ethics committee. Candidates will not be permitted to purchase gift cards for participants without such approval.

Travel Approval Process

If there are insufficient funds in a Candidate's HDR Funding Support account to pay the full amount of the travel, the Candidate will need to pay the difference from personal funds, prior to travel being booked. The School Officer will advise on this process.

Candidate Travel Form (STF)

ALL Candidates must complete the latest [Student Travel Form](#) (STF). A Student Travel Form must be submitted and approved prior to any travel-related expenditure, including flights and accommodation booking.

The Candidate must complete the STF and emails to their Supervisor for their signature. The Candidate then emails the STF with Supervisor signature to the School Officer (see contacts) who will obtain the remaining approval signatures on the Candidate's behalf.

Please note that retrospective travel approval and expense claims will not be authorised.

Flights

The School Officer will contact the Candidate to discuss and book travel plans. University funded travel must be organised through the University approved suppliers. Please note that Candidates are NOT permitted to purchase flights as ECU policy states all flights must be purchased with an ECU credit card through our approved provider.

The Candidate will be asked to provide passport information should travel be overseas.

Accommodation

Travellers on Authorised University Business must book traditional accommodation (registered hotels) via the University's Travel Agent. However, Travellers are permitted to book accommodation directly with:

- Registered hotels, in instances where Conference rates are available and cannot be obtained through the University's Travel Agent; and
- Airbnb, provided travellers take all appropriate measures to ensure their safety and assist the University in exercising its duty of care by following the [associated guidelines](#).

Reimbursement is not normally required, however in some instances the hotel may ask for payment direct from the traveller even when a third-party authorisation form has been completed by the School Officer. With this in mind, the Candidate may need to ensure they have adequate funds available to cover the cost of the accommodation.

Where Candidates wish to use Airbnb (www.airbnb.com.au) they will be responsible for their own booking, payment and claiming back the expenses. Reimbursement of this cost can be claimed where funding allows, and pre-approval has been provided.

Conference registration

Conference registration can be paid by the School Officer as part of the travel process. Please be aware that in order to make Early Bird conference payments, an approved [Student Travel Form](#) must be in place.

A maximum of \$1800 will normally be approved towards support for one national or international conference (for the duration of candidature) at which the Candidate must present a paper based on their research. Supervisors should take this into consideration in the Candidate budget at proposal stage. Any costs in excess of this maximum must be funded by other sources (i.e. relevant grant funding) or personal funds.

Documentary evidence of acceptance to present at the conference is required to be forwarded by the Candidate to the School Officer prior to any conference travel booking.

Scholarship recipients

Whilst abroad, the scholarship stipend will only be paid into a Scholarship Recipient's bank account in Australia. Any arrangements for the transfer of money overseas will be the responsibility of the Scholarship Recipient.

Approval to continue on scholarship whilst conducting research overseas does not constitute

approval to travel. This must be organised through the School as per above processes. International Candidates need to consider Visa implications such as eligibility to re-enter Australia.

For further information, please access the [Higher Degree by Research Scholarship Conditions document](#).

Travel Insurance

Candidates are covered by the University Travel Insurance policy, providing their travel is booked through the preferred supplier. However, if you will be overseas for more than 180 days, you may be required to arrange your own travel insurance for the entire duration of your trip. In addition, as a Candidate travelling if you are taking more than seven (7) days of private travel, you will need to purchase your own travel insurance for your private travel.

The following website provides up-to-date advice on the risk status of countries and needs to be consulted prior to considering overseas travel: <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au> International Travel will only be authorised subject to advice given by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Reimbursement of HDR Funding Support

Approved expenses, including travel related, must be submitted for reimbursement to the School Officer (see contacts) within 30 days of purchase date, otherwise the School reserves the right to refuse the reimbursement. Please note the process differs for reimbursement, depending on whether the claim exceeds \$100, so please contact the School Officer to discuss the reimbursement process.

All expense reimbursements must be supported by Supervisor approval and in the case of travel expense, an authorised Student Travel Form. Tax invoices for purchases and bank statement evidence must be presented (not EFTPOS receipts) as requested. Bank statements don't have to be certified but must show the Candidate's name and amount being claimed.

Only business-related expenses are reimbursable, and all meal expenses are subject to ECU entertainment limits and Australian Tax Office daily limits. Funding is usually claimed for expenses that occur during the degree and prior to the Candidate's graduation date. After completion, funding is at the discretion of the Associate Dean (Research). Please be aware that reimbursement may take 4-6 weeks depending on workload and pay cycles.