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Guideline Title: Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Variation in Enrolled Course

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 assist ECU Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Candidates apply to:

- a. *Transfer from a Master by Research (Mbr) to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), or*
- b. *Transfer from a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to a Master by Research (Mbr).*

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

- 4.1. This Guideline should be read in conjunction with the [Research Training policy](#), and the University's [Admissions, Enrolment and Academic Progression Rules](#) and associated operational documents.
- 4.2. Prior to commencing the transfer process, the Candidate must:

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- a. make themselves aware of the requirements of the course they wish to enrol into, including any requirements in coursework units or credit bearing units, and;
 - b. discuss their intention to transfer between HDR courses with their Supervisors.
- 4.3. Candidates should be aware that changes to their course will have implications for scholarships and course fees. Scholarship entitlements are not automatically transferred between courses. Scholarship recipients should check the conditions of award for their scholarship, and discuss this with their Supervisor and School Associate Dean (Research) prior to applying. If the enrolment change is approved, any candidature consumed from the Candidates current HDR course will typically be deducted from the total period of support remaining.
- 4.4. Student visa holders must ensure they are aware of the conditions of their visa. This includes any potential conditions which prohibit candidates changing course type, thesis or topic without appropriate approval. Student visa holders must discuss their intention to change a course with [Student Success](#) prior to commencing the transfer process.
- 4.5. The Candidate and Supervisor are responsible for ensuring that all ethics, risk assessment and other governance requirements are met with any change in their research, including that resulting from a change in course. Should the Candidate have any questions relating to their ethics application, they can contact the Research Ethics Team at research.ethics@ecu.edu.au.

Transfer from a Master by Research (MbR) to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

- 4.6. To be eligible to transfer to the PhD, Candidates must meet the following eligibility requirements:
- a. Be enrolled in an MbR course at Edith Cowan University (Candidates enrolled at other institutions, in Masters by Coursework or those that have completed their MbR are not eligible);
 - b. Have successfully completed Milestone 2 for their MbR;
 - c. Have endorsement from all Supervisors.
- 4.7. Candidates' application for transfer into the PhD will be assessed based upon:
- a. Their academic progression in the MbR course, including the completion of significant work demonstrably of PhD standard, satisfactory progress, and timely completion of [Milestones 1 and 2](#);
 - b. Their research, scholarly activity and outputs;
 - c. Demonstration that the proposed research meets the scope of a PhD;
 - d. Demonstrated ability to complete the proposed research within the remaining available EFTSL;
 - e. Assurance that the appropriate supervision and other support can be provided for the PhD research.

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- 4.8. Following discussion with the Supervisors, the Candidate must complete the [Variation in Enrolled HDR Course form](#) and prepare all required supporting documentation to justify transfer from an MbR to a PhD. Supporting evidence will include:
- a. the final MbR proposal and proposal reviewer reports from Milestone 2;
 - b. work completed to date on the MbR, including a completed MbR literature review chapter, completed MbR methodology chapter, and preliminary data analysis;
 - c. curriculum Vitae outlining measures of research excellence and success (e.g. conference papers, journal articles/creative research outputs, and/or grant funding).
 - d. a new PhD research proposal as per [ECU's HDR Milestone Guideline](#) that includes the following:
 - Introduction
 - Research questions and aims
 - Literature review
 - Methodology
 - Indicative timeline and activities plan to completion
- 4.9. Research conducted throughout the MbR may be used in the PhD, subject to any ethics, data management or other governance requirements. However, the PhD proposal must differ substantially from the original MbR proposal presented in Milestone 2. This would typically involve different or additional research questions and advance any work completed thus far.
- 4.10. The Candidate must have the completed form and supporting documentation reviewed by their supervisory panel and endorsed by their Principal Supervisor prior to review by the Associate Dean (Research). If endorsed by the Associate Dean (Research), all documentation will be emailed to Graduate Research Services (grs@ecu.edu.au), who will facilitate review by the Dean, Graduate Research. Graduate Research Services will notify the Candidate, Supervisor(s), and Associate Dean (Research) of the outcome of the Dean, Graduate Research's review.
- 4.11. If change in course enrolment to the PhD is approved:
- a. Graduate Research Services will forward documents outlined above to Student Administration to facilitate the change in enrolment. Student Administration (Admission/Enrolment Team) will process the course change and enrol the Candidate into the relevant PhD course.
 - b. If the Candidate is a scholarship recipient, Graduate Research Services will inform the Student Administration (Scholarships Team).
 - c. Graduate Research Services will update the Candidate's record to reflect the revised milestone requirements.
 - d. The Candidate is responsible to apply for any recognition of prior learning as per the [University's Prescribed](#) process, if relevant.

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Transfer from a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to a Master by Research (Mbr)

- 4.12. To be eligible to transfer to the Mbr Candidate must meet the following eligibility requirements:
- Be enrolled in a PhD course at Edith Cowan University (Candidates enrolled at other institutions, that have received an exit award, or those that have completed their PhD are not eligible);
 - Have successfully completed Milestone 1 for their PhD; and
 - Have endorsement from all Supervisors.
- 4.13. Candidates' application for transfer into the Mbr will be assessed based upon:
- their academic progression in the PhD course, including satisfactory progress, and timely completion of Milestones;
 - their previous research, scholarly activity and outputs;
 - demonstration that the proposed research meets the scope of a Mbr;
 - demonstrated ability to complete the requirement of the Mbr in the candidature period remaining;
 - assurance that the appropriate supervision and other support can be provided for the Mbr research;
 - recommendations from examiners if the PhD has been sent for examination.
- 4.14. Following discussion with the Supervisors, the Candidate must complete the [Variation in Enrolled HDR Course form](#) and prepare all required supporting documentation to justify transfer from an PhD to a Mbr. Supporting evidence may include:
- work completed to date on the PhD;
 - curriculum Vitae outlining measures of research excellence and success (e.g. conference papers, journal articles/creative research outputs, and/or grant funding).
 - a new Mbr research proposal that includes the following:
 - Introduction
 - Research questions and aims
 - Literature review
 - Methodology
 - Indicative timeline and activities plan to completion
- 4.15. Research conducted throughout the PhD may be used in the Mbr, subject to any ethics, data management or other governance requirements.
- 4.16. The Candidate must have the completed form and supporting documentation reviewed by their supervisory panel and endorsed by their Principal Supervisor prior to review by the Associate Dean (Research). If endorsed by the Associate Dean (Research), all documentation will be emailed to Graduate Research Services (grs@ecu.edu.au), who will facilitate review by the Dean, Graduate Research. Graduate Research Services will notify the Candidate,

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Supervisor(s), and Associate Dean (Research) of the outcome of the Dean, Graduate Research's review.

4.17. If change in course enrolment to the PhD is approved:

- a. Graduate Research Services will forward documents outlined above to Student Administration to facilitate the change in enrolment. Student Administration (Admission/ Enrolment Team) will process the course change and enrol the Candidate into the relevant PhD course.
- b. If the Candidate is a scholarship recipient, Graduate Research Services will inform Student Administration (Scholarships Team).
- c. Graduate Research Services will update the Candidate's record to reflect the revised milestone requirements.
- d. The Candidate is responsible to apply for any recognition of prior learning as per the [University's Prescribed process](#), if relevant.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Rules

[Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress](#)

Policies

[Research Training](#)

Operational documents and resources

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

[Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning](#)

[Student Success](#)

[Variation in Enrolled HDR Course form](#)

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

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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:	22 July 2025
Date last modified:	25 June 2026
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