

ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for
Graduate Research
Governance and
Management

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Introduction

The Higher Education Standards Framework Threshold Standards (HESF) represent the definitive set of requirements for Australian higher education providers. The Standards must be met for a university to be registered in Australia as a provider of higher education. They protect the quality and reputation of the sector and build operational excellence.

Graduate research education and program delivery is a responsibility that is shared across many organisational units across a university. These include academic organisational units (faculties, schools and Institutes, for example and centralised divisions, often including graduate schools or offices. Governance and management of graduate research can be highly devolved or centralised, depending on the Institution. All Australian universities must conform to a series of national frameworks and legislative and reporting requirements that currently include the HESF, AQF and the Commonwealth Scholarship Guidelines (Research) and HEIMS that fund and monitor graduate research education. The governance and management of graduate research education must also ensure that the providers abide by the rigorous standards imposed by the Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

These guidelines aim to support higher education providers in their provision of a quality experience for their graduate research candidates and to meet institutional, national and international expectations in graduate research education program design, delivery and quality assurance.

Using the Guidelines

The *ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for Graduate Research Governance and Management* support a pluralistic and dynamic approach to assuring sound governance and management of graduate research education. Whilst the degree of centralisation of the key processes associated with graduate research varies across institutions, it is essential that each university has a clear governance framework that identifies the locus of authority for decision making, documentation and reporting related to graduate research management. These guidelines are not intended as a checklist of minimal operational arrangements for all institutions but rather identify the key matters for consideration when determining particular delegations of authority and organisational structures for the management of graduate research programs that would be most appropriate within the context of each individual university.

This document is part of a suite of Good Practice Guidelines that are designed to support institutions as they develop their strategies and processes in particular important areas of

operation. They support the *Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles*, which articulate a set of standards considered to be essential for the delivery of graduate research programs.

Recommendations

Strategic Planning and Resourcing

1. Informed by emerging trends in graduate research and research training, universities should develop and promote graduate research strategic and operational/resourcing plans that are relevant to their own institutional contexts.
2. Universities should have clear and accessible policies relating to admission into, progress through, withdrawal from, and examinations in a graduate research program, and a shared understanding of where authority lies in decisions relating to the various processes associated with admission and examination.
3. Variations in courses of study, locations, research methodologies, examination processes and outputs relevant to different project types and fields of research should all be considered when developing these policies and procedures.
4. Universities should support high quality collaborative research training arrangements within and beyond their institution, including with industry/end-users, international partners and other universities.

Governance, decision making and design

5. Graduate research decision-making roles and responsibilities should be aligned to position descriptions and role statements, delegated with consideration of the proportionate risks and impacts across the institution, devolved to reduce unnecessary administration where possible and enabled by appropriate training and support.
6. The authorities, policies and procedures in place to manage graduate research education should ensure transparency, consistency and equitable access across the institution for all candidates and supervisors.
7. Universities should appropriately engage with all relevant stakeholders (including candidates and end-users) when developing or reviewing graduate research strategies, performance expectations, and policies and procedures, including candidates and industry/end-user partners.
8. Universities should clearly articulate and promote the responsibilities and rights of each of the stakeholders in graduate research provision (candidates, supervisors,

schools/faculties, other academic units, and central support services including graduate schools and offices)

9. Universities should include in their academic governance structure senior academic leadership with institutional responsibility for graduate research education. These leaders should work closely within their university with academic organisational units and also externally engage with national peak bodies to enhance the quality and reputation of their graduate research provision and ensure operational effectiveness.
10. Appropriate professional leadership and administrative staffing should be appointed to facilitate effective, consistent and accessible management of the broad range operations involved in the delivery of high-quality graduate research experiences.
11. Universities should support compliance with HESF expectations for research training by ensuring that decision makers and managers of research training programs have the required delegations of authority/recognition and are appropriately trained.

Admissions, candidature management, examinations and support

12. All university procedures and operational practices that include (or are applicable to) graduate research candidates should take into account and accommodate the particular timing and needs of those undertaking a research degree.
13. Universities should have clear processes to confirm that appropriate supervision and quality research environment is in place prior to admission of a candidate and to ensure that this environment can be maintained throughout candidature.
14. Universities should establish appropriate induction programs and operational processes to support a responsible research culture and environment.
15. The responsibility for documentation and reporting of progress management and support during candidature should be clear and the processes that ensure that the assessment of the major assessable research outputs via the HDR examination should be managed to meet all relevant accreditation standards.
16. Universities should ensure that they can provide timely access to services that support HDR candidate well-being and safety.
17. Universities should establish and implement a framework for the professional development of all supervisors and ensure managerial oversight of supervision quality.
18. Universities should have clear policies and procedures and transparent processes for the management of Student Grievances, Complaints, Appeals, and Research Integrity matters involving HDR candidates.