HDR Candidature Duration and Enrolment Variation Procedure

Section 1 - Context

(1) This procedure sets out the rules and processes relating to higher degree by research (HDR) candidature duration and enrolment variation.

Section 2 - Authority

(2) Authority for this document is established by the Higher Degrees by Research Policy.

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This procedure applies to all HDR candidates.

Section 4 - Procedure

Duration of Candidature and Research Commencement Date

(4) Permitted HDR candidature duration is calculated using Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL) as follows:

a. PhD: minimum 3.0 EFTSL and maximum 4.0 EFTSL.
b. Masters by research: minimum 1.0 EFTSL and maximum 2.0 EFTSL.

(5) Research commencement date is stated in the candidate's offer of admission and is the date from which candidature duration is calculated.

(6) All candidates should enrol for the first time by the research commencement date.

(7) Candidates unable to start by the research commencement date must notify SGR immediately and may need to seek a deferment via email to their senior supervisor to ensure that their candidature duration is correctly calculated. Deferments are subject to rules set out in the HDR Admissions and Scholarships Procedure.

a. SGR will process deferments on receipt of email confirmation by the senior supervisor of the new, agreed research commencement date.
b. Failure to seek a deferment in the event of a candidate not enrolling by the research commencement date within one month will result in the candidate's offer of admission lapsing, which may also affect visa and scholarship status.

(8) Candidates must remain enrolled for the duration of their candidature unless on an approved leave of absence.

a. Candidates may be enrolled by SGR in training and development activity post-submission, such as research

internships. They may not themselves enrol in classes for this purpose.

Variations to Candidature

(9) Variations to candidature are subject to approval by the ADVC RT&D, unless otherwise specified in this procedure, on provision of supporting evidence and subject to any applicable scholarship terms and conditions.

Study Load

(10) Candidate enrolment shall be either full-time (1.0 EFTSL per 12 months), or part-time (0.5 EFTSL per 12 months).

(11) Full-time commitment will average at least four days per week over the course of a year. Part-time commitment will average at least two days per week over the course of a year. Any work, paid or otherwise, undertaken by the candidate outside of their research project must not affect their ability to maintain this commitment.

(12) International candidates studying in Australia on a student visa must complete and submit a Recommendation to Reduce Enrolment Load Form and supporting documentation (CASP, medicate certificates, etc.) to their HDR DA. If the recommendation is endorsed, the HDR administrator submits the documentation for approval by the ADVC RT&D.

(13) All other candidates can request change between full- and part-time study load for an enrolment period by submitting a request to their senior supervisor and notifying their HDR administrator. If the request is approved, the HDR administrator submits the request to SGR for processing.

Leave

(14) Candidates are entitled to a total of 20 working days' annual leave per year. Annual leave is recorded on the candidate record by the HDR administrator in the enrolling school. No application form is required for this leave.

(15) Candidates must discuss any proposed leave period with their senior supervisor prior to applying for any type of leave.

(16) Candidates are entitled to a total of twelve (12) months' leave of absence (LOA) per candidature to cover medical, compassionate or compelling circumstances which prevent the candidate carrying out research, subject to provision of appropriate documentation and any terms and conditions of their scholarship/sponsorship.

(17) Candidates are entitled to up to six (6) months' parental leave, including adoption leave for each child born or adopted during candidature, subject to provision of appropriate documentation and any terms and conditions of their scholarship/sponsorship.

(18) Requests for parental leave may be granted in addition to the standard LOA provisions.

(19) Candidates may apply for all types of LOA, including parental leave, by submitting a Leave of Absence Form with supporting documentation to their HDR administrator.

(20) Candidates receiving a scholarship or sponsorship must contact their provider to discuss the potential impact of LOA on their scholarship/sponsorship.

(21) Candidates whose research has ethics approval, or an ethics approval pending, must notify the secretary of the relevant ethics committee when any application by them for LOA is granted, as this can impact their ethics approval.

(22) If the application for LOA is less than the total amount permissible for candidature (12 months) the LOA form must be submitted for approval by the HDR DA, after consultation with the supervisory team. If the application is approved, the HDR administrator must submit the documentation to SGR for processing.

This document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as unauthorised and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the reader to refer to RMIT's Policy Register for the latest version of this document.

(23) If the application for LOA is greater than the total amount permissible for candidature (12 months) or the candidate has been granted an extension beyond maximum duration, the LOA form must be submitted for endorsement by the HDR DA, after consultation with the supervisory team. If the application is endorsed, the HDR administrator must submit the documentation for approval by the ADVC RT&D.

(24) SGR will notify candidates of the outcome of their LOA application.

(25) Candidature maximum and milestone due dates are adjusted for any periods of approved LOA and candidates must cease working on their research during this period.

(26) Access to University facilities and resources will be restricted during a period of LOA.

(27) A candidate may request a review of a decision to vary or reject their application for leave in accordance with the Enrolment Processes.

Study Away and Change of Location

(28) The University has a duty to manage the risk to enrolled candidates' safety and wellbeing and to assure the quality of their experience.

(29) For this reason, candidates must inform the University of their intent to spend any time away from their normal location of study for the purposes of their research, to ensure appropriate risk assessments and controls have been put in place to cover their travel and activity in accordance with the RMIT Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Failure to do so will limit the University's ability to support candidates' safety and wellbeing.

(30) For periods of less than three months' relocation or 6 months' travel in or outside of Australia, 'study away' conditions apply:

a. Candidates should complete the Study Away Form at least two weeks prior to travel, to enable appropriate risk assessments and arrangements to be made for the proposed activity.
b. Study away approval is subject to international travel advice and the demonstration of appropriate risk controls, such as insurance.
c. Candidates may seek advice and support from the University's Global Assistance Program.
d. Candidates changing their normal location of study for a period of three months or more, must notify RMIT of their 'change of location' by submitting a Notification of Change of Study Location Form to their HDR administrator.

(31) Changing location between Australia and a country outside of Australia will have implications for those candidates requiring a student visa.

a. Where an international candidate on a student visa is planning a permanent change of location outside of Australia, on receipt of the form, SGR will notify RMIT's International Compliance office that the candidate is leaving Australia and no longer requires a confirmation of enrolment (eCoE).
b. Candidates must update their RMIT record with any change to address and contact details as a result of a study away period or a change of location.

Program Transfer

(32) For candidates wishing to transfer between HDR programs or to RMIT from another university, the transfer may be supported, subject to entry and admission conditions being met, if:

a. less than 3.0 EFTSL has been consumed in a PhD, or

b. less than 1.0 EFTSL consumed in a masters by research.

(33) A transfer after 3.0 EFTSL (PhD) or 1.0 EFTSL (masters by research) may take place in exceptional circumstances, subject to approval by the ADVC RT&D.

(34) Candidates may request a transfer to another HDR program by submitting an application via the RMIT University Application Service. Candidates must discuss their proposed change of program with their supervisory team (and proposed supervisory team, if a change of supervisor is required) before submitting supporting documentation to the HDR administrator in the school offering the proposed program (see 6.7-6.9 below).

(35) The transfer application must be endorsed by the HDR DA in the school offering the proposed program, after consultation with the proposed supervisory team.

(36) If approved, candidates will receive an offer of admission to their new program from SGR.

(37) In accordance with the HDR Sanctions Assessment Process, candidates who are subject to sanctions assessment must have a new sanctions assessment completed by their senior supervisor (or proposed senior supervisor) before any transfer can be processed.

(38) The following supporting documentation is required for transfer at the same level (masters to masters or PhD to PhD):

a. the reasons for the request
b. a summary of the work completed
c. an outline of the work remaining
d. a timeline for the completion of the work remaining
e. evidence of support from the senior supervisor (or proposed senior supervisor)
f. a Change of Supervisor Form, if a change of supervisor is required (see the HDR Supervision Arrangements Procedure for further details).

(39) Transfer from a masters to a PhD program

a. Candidates who wish to transfer from a masters to a PhD program must demonstrate that they can expand the scope of their research to doctoral level by presenting a PhD-level confirmation of candidature in place of a masters-level second milestone review. The HDR Progress Management Procedure provides further information on milestone reviews.
b. Supporting documentation must include:
    i. milestone review outcome notification from SGR inviting the candidate to transfer program
    ii. evidence of support from the senior supervisor (or proposed senior supervisor)
    iii. a Change of Supervisor Form, if a change of supervisor is required.

(40) Transfer from a PhD to a masters program

a. Candidates who wish to transfer from a PhD to masters program must demonstrate that they can reduce the scope of their research to masters-level by presenting a masters-level milestone.
b. Supporting documentation must include:
    i. masters-level milestone review outcome notification from SGR inviting the candidate to transfer program
    ii. evidence of support from the senior supervisor (or proposed senior supervisor)
    iii. a Change of Supervisor Form, if a change of supervisor is required.

This document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as unauthorised and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the reader to refer to RMIT's Policy Register for the latest version of this document.

Transfer to Another University

(41) Candidates wishing to transfer to another university may obtain documentation about their candidature, including transcripts, from SGR on request at the point of cancellation.

Early Submission for Examination

(42) Candidates who wish to submit for examination before the minimum duration of candidature stated in the Higher Degrees by Research Policy must submit a case for early submission to the HDR administrator. The case must include:

a. the background of the request, and
b. support from their senior supervisor.

(43) The case must be endorsed by the HDR DA. If the recommendation is endorsed, the HDR administrator must submit the documentation for approval by the ADVC RT&D.

Readmission Within Maximum Duration

(44) Candidates who wish to apply for readmission within maximum duration must submit an application via the RMIT University Application Service. Candidates must discuss their proposed readmission with their supervisory team before submitting supporting documentation to the HDR administrator in the school offering the program.

(45) Supporting documentation must include:

a. the background of the request
b. a summary of work completed prior to the cancellation of enrolment
c. an outline of the work remaining
d. a timeline for the completion of the work remaining
e. a change of supervisor form, if a change of supervisor is required.

(46) If approved for readmission, the candidate will be issued an offer with a revised maximum completion date and advised to enrol online.

Extension Beyond Maximum Duration

(47) Candidates may apply for an extension beyond maximum duration by submitting a Candidate Action and Support Plan (CASP). Candidates should discuss their extension and develop their CASP with their supervisory team before submitting it to their HDR administrator. For more details on CASPs see the HDR Progress Management Procedure.

(48) Extensions beyond maximum duration of candidature are not automatic and, if approved, are strictly capped at the duration of the approved, accompanying CASP.

(49) The extension application must be endorsed by the HDR DA, after consultation with the supervisory team. If the application is endorsed, the HDR administrator must submit the documentation for approval by the ADVC RT&D.

(50) International candidates studying in Australia on a student visa will be advised how to apply for a new eCoE for a visa extension if their extension beyond maximum is approved.

Cancellation Due to Exceeding Maximum Duration

(51) Candidates and their supervisory team will receive at least two automated notifications that the candidate is approaching their maximum completion date.

This document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as unauthorised and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the reader to refer to RMIT's Policy Register for the latest version of this document.

(52) Candidates who do not submit by their maximum completion date, or their extension end-date, will be notified that they have exceeded maximum duration of candidature. This notification will inform candidates of the options available to them and advise that, if they do not take any action, the ADVC RT&D will request that the Academic Registrar cancel the candidate's enrolment.

(53) Candidates whose enrolment is cancelled for exceeding maximum duration are eligible to apply for readmission for the purpose of examination within three years of their cancellation. See the HDR Submission and Examination Procedure for further information.

Section 5 - Procedures and Resources

(54) Refer to the:

a. HDR Forms:
    i. Change of Supervisor Form
    ii. Leave of Absence Form
    iii. Notification of Change of Study Location Form
    iv. Recommendation to Reduce Enrolment Load Form
    v. Study Away Form

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	19th October 2020
Review Date	12th November 2021
Approval Authority	Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Development
Approval Date	27th July 2020
Expiry Date	17th April 2021
Policy Owner	Calum Drummond Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation
Policy Author	Simon Pervan Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Development
Enquiries Contact	School of Graduate Research

This document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as unauthorised and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the reader to refer to RMIT's Policy Register for the latest version of this document.