

Career Preparedness for HDR students *Providing appropriate training to support skills development for a range of career outcomes*

Professor Helen Klaebe

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Graduate Research and Development)



Traditional model of HDR training

Master's apprentice model of HDR supervision

HDRs trained for academic careers

Focus on timely completions
i.e. training focused on
milestones and research skills



Why change?



ACOLA review of Research Training:
Only 30% of students will find
employment in academia

Researchers are now also required to
engage with industry and end-users and
have enterprise/innovation skills

Universities globally are responding to a new HDR employment landscape by developing learning opportunities for students to engage with industry and professional skill-building

QUT benchmarking, surveys, and focus groups clearly identify need for:

- Employability and skills training
- centralised programmatic approach
- Ability to tailor learning to students' needs
- Multimodal, flexible learning options

What do non-academic employers need?

Industry value transferable skills such as communication, problem solving, leadership, digital literacy, and project management.

65% of Australian companies struggle to find employees that meet their skills needs

Employability skills should be developed at unis via workshops, modules, internships and with the stronger involvement of companies

What skills do academics need now?

- Academics need to be able to work in transdisciplinary teams
- Engagement with industry and end-users also essential

How do we address these needs?

Universities need to balance a number of priorities from Government, industry, community, and students.

Need to consider:

- What skills to be included in curriculum: AQF + broader skills?
- Compulsory or self directed?
- Each student has different professional backgrounds = different skills
- Students need to start with identifying what skills should be developed

QUT HDR Skills Audit tool

HDR Skills Audit and Assessment Tool for QUT Higher Degree by Research Students

What is this for?

This HDR Skills Audit is a living document that should be started at your Stage 2 or Research Proposal milestone. It should be discussed with your Supervisor and/or Faculty advisor early in candidature but ultimately it is your own self-assessment document that you should use to decide on what additional learning you will need to support your research and career needs. It is designed so that you can identify your current strengths and skills gaps and then map them to course learning objectives and your own training/career goals in order to plan your coursework requirements. You should revisit the form throughout your research degree as needs change. These skills are based on the AQF learning objectives required to complete your Higher Degree by Research, skills which will be relevant to a career in an academic research setting and broader skills sets which are relevant to many other career paths and important to employers of research graduates. It is significant to acknowledge when planning your training needs that the majority of HDR graduates today go on to careers and employment outside of academia.

It is important to note that this tool should be discussed with your Supervisor at the beginning of candidature and then be kept as a living document that you will use throughout your candidature to personalise your own learning journey.

How do we use it?

To use this tool you are asked to nominate a level you currently believe you have achieved for each skill (1 being the lowest and corresponding to little or no knowledge and 5 being the highest and meaning that you need no further development to complete your degree). You may have existing skills from previous professional roles or research activities which you believe are relevant to the competencies in the table, however it is important that you initially discuss these with your supervisor who can help you contextualise these to the research requirements of your degree and allow you both to decide how relevant this experience is:

Skill level 5: Exceptional or prolonged experience, exceeding the standard of a graduate research student.

Skill level 4: Experience at the level expected of a graduate research student

Skill level 3: Some skills or experience, further development of these skills would facilitate your research or career objectives

Skill levels 1-2: Significant limitations or no experience, requires further development to assist you in undertaking research or meeting goals

Once you have identified your needs you can work with your supervisor and faculty to identify from the course training resources what units or modules are available to you to assist in improving this skill level and/or consult the site: qut.to/gred to assist you in selection. It is not necessary to achieve a 5 for every skill but rather you should decide what reasonable learning endpoints are for you.

N/A – If you or your supervisor agree that this skill is not relevant to your course learning objectives or career goals, you may wish to mark it as not applicable

See below for an example in *blue italics* of how the tool can be populated.

What are the most effective means of offering skills development?

- Modular
- Flexible
- Multimodal
- Experiential
- Mentoring
- Internships

Personalised learning journeys at QUT

I want to...

Be an academic



Engage with industry



Understand intellectual property and commercialisation



Impact of training – Meriem’s journey

Transdisciplinarity in Research module

Three Minute Thesis

Leadership and Communication Module

Project Management Module

Inner Journey to Resilience workshop

Entrepreneurship Module

Research Commercialisation Module

IMNIS Industry Mentoring program

Industry preparation module

Accepted for an internship in Boston Start-up

drug development company



Meriem, QUT Health PhD student

“..we are fortunate enough at QUT to have access to excellent training that could potentially change our career and lives”

“I completed the interviews brilliantly by emphasising on the skills developed during QUT training”

Barriers to career development

Articulation of skills –
HDRs tend to focus on
their research and not
the skills they've gained.

Embed skills
articulation in
optional learning

Evidencing skills gained
by optional learning can
be difficult

Investigating
microcredentialling

Next steps...

- Developing skills articulation
- Investigating microcredentialling
- Cultural change among supervisory cohort
- Where do ECRs fit?
- The role of internships