Australian Graduate Research

Good Practice Principles

About

The Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles articulate a set of standards considered to be essential for the delivery of graduate research programs. The Graduate Research Good Practice Principles have been developed and endorsed by the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) and contain high level statements about governance, policy and procedural standards that ACGR believe are necessary components of quality graduate research programs. These principles should apply to all candidates, supervisors and programs, regardless of the mode or location of delivery.

Along with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the Graduate Research Good Practice Principles are listed by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority (TEQSA) as one of two Reference Points for the 2015 Higher Education Standards (HES) Framework Domain 4.2: Research Training.

TEQSA Reference Points are significant codes or frameworks that TEQSA considers may be helpful to higher education providers in considering how particular standards may be met or demonstrated. Use of the Reference Points is not mandated by TEQSA. However, institutions delivering graduate research programs in Australia are encouraged to use the Graduate Research Good Practice Principles to review and monitor their graduate search program delivery and support structures to ensure that they meet the Research Training Standards of the HES Framework.

Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles

The following good practice principles are considered to be essential for the development of graduate research programs:

1. Admission requirements and processes for entry to graduate research programs are transparent and clearly documented.
2. Support for graduate research candidates focuses on facilitating a successful completion within a reasonable timeframe.
3. Graduate research candidates are supported to undertake original research and scholarly activities whilst developing key research and employability skills for academic and non-academic careers.
4. Graduate research candidates have access to information on the resources available to help facilitate the timely completion of a quality research project and have an opportunity to engage with scholarly communities both within the university and globally.

5. Supervisors must provide guidance to graduate research candidates in the design, conduct and timely completion of the research project, support in publication and dissemination of research findings and advise on the acquisition of a range of research and other skills as appropriate to the discipline and the background of the candidate. Supervisors also play a critical role in the development of both research and transferable skills to equip candidates with graduate attributes relevant to the breadth of employability opportunities open to post-doctoral candidates.

6. Thesis examination is conducted by at least two experts of international standing in the discipline who are external to the enrolling institution, independent of the conduct of the research, and without any real or perceived conflict of interest in reaching their decision.

1. Principles of Graduate Research Selection and Admissions

Key Principle

Admission requirements and processes for entry to a graduate research program are transparent and clearly documented.

Sub-principle

1. The University has a clear description of admission criteria for entry into each graduate research program.
2. The University has policies and procedures that are consistently applied and ensure the admission of candidates only where there is an appropriate fit between the applicant, research environment, available resources and supervision capacity.

2. Principles of Graduate Research Candidature

Key Principle

Support for graduate research candidates focuses on facilitating a successful completion within a reasonable timeframe.

Sub-principle

1. The University provides an induction to all new candidates that includes information about the expectations and responsibilities of supervisors and candidates, the degree requirements, progress procedures, research integrity and ethics, grievance procedures, health and safety procedures and the availability of support services.
2. The University has a formal procedure to review the development of the candidate and progress of the candidature against clear criteria and to identify and address issues that may require additional attention, resources or other support. Where progress is judged to be unsatisfactory, there must be a transparent process identified for remedial action by the candidate and/or supervisory panel and/or conditions by which candidature discontinuation may occur.
3. Regular structured feedback is sought from candidates on their experience in order to identify areas for improvement.
4. The University provides complaints resolution and grievance procedures that enable candidates to express their concerns in a safe, fair and equitable context.
5. The University provides appropriate levels of personal and pastoral support for candidates.

3. Principles of Graduate Research Candidate Development

Key Principle

Graduate research candidates are supported to undertake original research and scholarly activities whilst developing key research and employability skills for academic and non-academic careers.

Sub-principle

1. With the primary objective of research and research skill development, transferable skill training is integrated within the higher degree program rather than separate and additional to it.
2. Universities articulate the (non-research specific) skill sets that each candidate will acquire by the completion of their candidature.
3. Early assessment of the prior learning and skill level of every candidate should inform the development of training programs for candidates from diverse educational, employment and cultural backgrounds.

4. The University offers relevant development opportunities that are aligned with each stage of the candidature. Supervisors support the development of discipline specific research skills, general academic skills and career planning.
5. Candidates should have opportunities to develop skills and experience diverse research environments through collaboration, partnerships, internships, and national and international conference participation.
6. Transferable skills developed and assessed as part of graduate research program are documented and formally recognised on graduation.
7. The University periodically and systematically reviews the processes and outcomes of developmental activities for candidates.

4. Principles for Resources and Intellectual Climate

Key Principle

Graduate research candidates have access to information on the resources available to help facilitate timely completion of a quality research project and have an opportunity to engage with scholarly communities both within the university and globally.

Sub-principle

1. The University is transparent in providing guidance regarding resources, infrastructure, and support that is available to all current and prospective candidates.
2. The University provides the resources required for candidates to complete a high-quality research project. The resources available are appropriate to the agreed project and location of the candidate and include information on research ethics and conduct, library support, information services and IT infrastructure, workplace health and safety training, access to academic and personal counselling, access to appropriate mediation or grievance resolution procedures, and, where appropriate, post thesis submission support until graduation.
3. The University ensures that any third party arrangements that affect the candidate and the proposed research are stipulated prior to enrolment and that the candidate is advised of any changes that will impact on the conduct of the research project or their candidature.

4. The University's policies and procedures for the allocation of domestic and international scholarships are widely available and include clearly defined eligibility and selection criteria as well as information regarding scholarship conditions.
5. The University provides opportunities for candidates to be actively involved with the intellectual culture and to interact with other researchers, both within their university and globally.
6. The University provides opportunities for candidates to engage socially with other candidates and academic staff.

5. Principles for Graduate Research Supervision

Key Principle

Supervisors must provide guidance to graduate research candidates in the design, conduct and timely completion of the research project and support in publication and dissemination of research findings. Supervisors also play a critical role in the development of both research and transferable skills to equip candidates with graduate attributes relevant to the breadth of employability opportunities open to post-doctoral candidates.

Sub-principle

1. There must be at least two academic staff members providing supervision for the duration of each candidature.
2. Supervision is appropriately attributed and recognised as a specialised, workload-bearing academic function that has educational and research dimensions.
3. Supervisors are active researchers who possess relevant scholarly expertise.
4. The University has appropriate eligibility criteria for all categories of supervisors.
5. When appointing supervisors the University considers the expertise of the person, the duration of their appointment, other work tasks and any conflict of interest or privileged relationships.
6. The University provides guidance on the management of supervisor appointment, expected level of experience, supervisory loads, and appropriate supervisory conduct.
7. The University provides necessary and appropriate professional development and performance review for supervisors.

6. Principles of Graduate Research Examination

Key Principle

Thesis[1] examination is conducted by at least two experts of international standing in the discipline who are external to the enrolling institution, independent of the conduct of the research, and without any real or perceived conflict of interest in reaching their decision.

Sub-principle

1. The thesis adheres to the principles of research integrity as stipulated in the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research including authorship, plagiarism and research ethics. Theses include a statement of originality incorporating an acknowledgement of others' contributors, editorial assistance, and copyright provisions and approvals.

2. The University has clear and transparent procedures for the nomination and appointment of examiners, the identification of inappropriate examiners, a timely examination process, the evaluation of examiners' reports, and mechanisms for appeal.

3. The University ensures that examiners hold a degree equivalent to, or possess equivalent professional experience, the degree they are examining.

4. Where appropriate, confidentiality of the examination process should be maintained and the candidate and supervisor must not communicate with examiners during the examination process except where a viva is involved.

5. Examiners provide written recommendations to the University on whether or not the thesis meets the award criteria.

6. The University's processes for determining the outcome of the examination process are available to candidates, supervisors, examiners, and others, and include the opportunity for written communication between the candidate and the committee(s) involved in determining the examination outcome.

7. Normally, open access to the final thesis is provided by the University. There may be reasons including public interest, copyright, commercial-in-confidence, intellectual

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[1] The Thesis is defined as a substantial and intellectually coherent product or product(s) using one or more media such as a thesis, dissertation and artefacts, or exegesis and portfolio of creative works and/or performance.

property or ethical sensitivities that require an embargo for a designated period of time.