



School of Psychology – Postgraduate Research Handbook

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Welcome

Welcome to the School of Psychology. This School attaches the highest priority to the attainment of research excellence and to the advancement of knowledge relevant to psychology as a scientific and profession discipline. Accordingly, it aims to foster an intellectually stimulating learning environment and to ensure that the infrastructure necessary for the serious pursuit of scholarly and research interests is available to its academic staff and students.

Postgraduate students are seen both as special beneficiaries of, and vitally important contributors to, the development and maintenance of this distinctive research-based climate and culture. Postgraduate students are strongly encouraged to present their research findings at scientific and professional meetings,

to submit their work for review and publication in refereed journals of international stature and, more generally, to see themselves as active participants in the psychological research community. The School's goal is to ensure that, on completion of their degrees, students are capable of carrying out high quality research on questions of genuine significance and thus fully prepare to contribute to the advancement of knowledge within the discipline.

Contacts

Procedural matters and grievances:

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For issues regarding scholarships, induction, or the first-year research proposal, please contact Mike Le Pelley. For issues regarding thesis submission or examination, please contact Chris Donkin. For issues regarding ongoing candidature, please contact either postgraduate coordinator

Enrolment:

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Postgraduate Committee

There is a School Postgraduate Committee that consists of the Head of School, and the two Postgraduate Coordinators, Chris Donkin and Mike Le Pelley. The function of this Committee is to monitor student progress, respond to specific individual problems, and make decisions about general procedures and policy.

Mentoring program

The School of Psychology offers a mentoring program for its PhD students. The aim of the program is to guide and support PhD students through the challenges of higher degree research and building a research career. The mentors are early and midcareer researchers (EMCRs) in the School who have recently completed their PhD and often have a lot of wisdom to share. The second aim of the program is to provide opportunities for students to build connections with other researchers in the School. As such PhD students are typically matched with a mentor outside their immediate area of research to broaden the student's network.

The format of the mentoring program is loosely structured around a monthly meeting schedule and a peer mentoring manual to guide these meetings. The manual covers key topics of concern for students – including time management, networking, motivation, difficult conversations and career pathways. Ultimately, these meetings are designed to be flexible and student-led. Typically, meetings take place on campus or over a coffee but can also take place remotely over Teams or Zoom. Sometimes a mentor will be paired with more than one student, and so meetings could take place in a group. The mentoring program also hosts Q&A or seminars on topics of interest to HDR students throughout the year.

An open call is made to HDR students and EMCs at the beginning of every academic year to invite new students and mentors to the program and to gauge if existing participants wish to continue in the program. If you have any questions or would like to express your interest in the mentoring program, please contact the program coordinator Belinda Liddell, b.liddell@unsw.edu.au.

Supervision

The relationship that a PhD student forms with their supervisor is one of the most important that they will have, not only during the period of their candidature but also in the years that follow. The quality of the research that is undertaken towards the PhD may well depend in part on the quality of this relationship. The intellectual satisfaction that is gained from the experience of doing this research is likely to be a reflection to some extent of the student-supervisor relationship as well. To be effective, such relationships need to be cultivated by both the supervisor and the student. Good research student supervision is a priority for the academic staff in this School.

As stated in the UNSW [Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines](#), it may be helpful to reach an agreement with your supervisor on such things as regularity of meetings (e.g., at least one formal meeting per month), deadlines for written work, the resources available to be used in your research, and any part-time work that you may undertake during your candidature). During any formally scheduled meetings, some students and supervisors find it useful to take notes regarding their committed undertakings prior to the next meeting.

The role of the co-supervisor varies widely from person to person. In some cases, the co-supervisor might provide on-going advice on aspects of the research, while in other cases the co-supervisor might only be

involved to the extent of being a formal reviewer of the research proposal and mid-candidature reports. In the absence of the supervisor for any lengthy period, the co-supervisor might take on a greater involvement during that time.

Duration of candidature

The expected duration of the PhD is 3.5 years and the MSc 2 years. Note that the University may be compelled to withdraw the student's place if the candidature exceeds four years for PhD and three years for MSc. To maintain their enrolment under these circumstances, students may be required to pay full fees.

Seminar attendance

To contribute to your training as researchers, attendance at the following is required for all postgraduate research students. **Note that failure to attend these seminars on a regular basis will result in a suspension of your student research account.**

School Colloquium

These presentations of research by visiting and local scholars are held weekly during session (schedules and venues are announced by email at the start of each session, and a timetable should be available on the 'Research' page of the School of Psychology website). Colloquia are a very important way in which you can learn about research in Psychology, not just in your own area of interest but in a wide range of topics. They are often a useful way to pick up information about aspects of psychology that you would never otherwise come across. In addition, it can be instructive to see how other people go about presenting their research: You can learn much about the "do's and don'ts" of how to communicate to an audience. Finally, the question period is a useful time for you to ask questions of the speaker and you are certainly encouraged to do so. As frightening as it might seem at first, the skill of asking questions is something that is worth developing, and the colloquium is an ideal forum in which to do this.

Postgraduate Student Seminar

A meeting of research students is held each Tuesday during session (meetings are current held online, starting at 12.30pm or 1pm; a schedule will be provided). The main aim of these seminars is to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of research being conducted by postgraduate students in the School. These seminars are an excellent opportunity for you to find out more about the excellent research being conducted by HDR students in the School, and provide a chance for students to gain experience of presenting their research to a wider audience. Students are expected to give TWO presentations during their candidature (see [Monitoring Progress](#) below).

It is expected that all students will consistently attend the School Colloquium and Postgraduate Student Seminars throughout their candidature. Remedial action may be taken if attendance is not satisfactory. Students are also very much encouraged to attend colloquia even in the later stages of their candidature. These seminars are intended to be interactive: you are strongly encouraged to ask questions of the speaker – both because it is a useful skill for you to develop, but also because it might help the speaker think about aspects of their research in a new way.

Additional course requirements may be specified for some students in order to fill significant gaps in their preparation for postgraduate research in psychology. In most cases these will be determined at the time of admission, but further prescriptions may be indicated by the Postgraduate Committee where necessary. A student whose thesis is in the area of clinical or forensic psychology may be permitted to take relevant Masters courses under certain conditions with the consent of their supervisor, the Postgraduate Committee, and the relevant Masters Committee. Any arrangement of this nature can only be approved, however, if it is clear that it will not significantly hinder the student's rate of progress in their research program.

Monitoring progress

Continued enrolment of all HDR candidates is subject to satisfactory progress being made, as assessed in accordance with University procedures. These requirements are outlined below.

1. Research Integrity Training

All new HDR candidates are required to complete UNSW Research Integrity training during their first year of candidature. You should be automatically enrolled in this course on Moodle. If you have any questions, then either email a Postgraduate Coordinator, or your Candidature Management Officer directly. You can find out more information on this training module [here](#).

2. Thesis Research Proposal

All students are required to submit a research proposal of approximately 4,000 words (**and no more than 4,500 words**) for consideration by the Postgraduate Committee. You are expected to submit your proposal **by the end of your second term**. If you find you are having difficulties meeting this deadline, make sure that your supervisor and the Postgraduate Coordinator are aware of the problems so that progress can be expedited. Keep in mind that the proposal needs to be approved by the Committee, some data collected and an oral presentation given, prior to the end of your first year of full-time equivalent study. It is important that you discuss the content of your proposal with your supervisor who will need to approve the final written version before submission. It may also be useful to consult with your co-supervisor, who will be one of the formal reviewers of the proposal. The other reviewer will be a member of academic staff.

Your proposal should be submitted in electronic copy only to Linda Camilleri, copying in one of the Postgraduate Coordinators (Chris Donkin).

The research proposal should contain the following headings and information:

a. Aims, Significance, and Background

This section should clearly state the aims of the research and what significant contribution to knowledge can be expected from it. It should include a brief review of the literature on the theoretical and empirical issues relevant to the proposed research.

b. Research Plan

This section should include: (1) a description of the methods and techniques to be used, (2) an outline of at least one of the proposed experiments/studies, (3) a timeline (at least until the end of the first year) for the completion of activities/experiments, and, if relevant, (4) a brief consideration of any ethical issues raised by the research, and how you propose to deal with them.

The proposal should provide sufficient information on the specific issues and methodological details to enable reviewers (who are broadly familiar with the area in which you are working) to evaluate the significance and effectiveness of the studies planned. If you wish (and particularly if explicitly suggested by your supervisor), you may submit a more extensive literature review to the Committee either prior to, or at the same time as, the Research Proposal. Although the Committee and reviewers would not be required to examine such a document, it may be useful for reviewers to consult if they require more detail on theoretical background etc. Such an extensive review will also, of course, be helpful when you later come to write up your thesis.

Candidates will convene a panel meeting to be held approximately four weeks after the submission of the proposal. The panel will consist of the supervisor and the two reviewers of the proposal. That meeting will provide an opportunity for the candidate to obtain helpful and perhaps critical comments and suggestions from independent sources. At the conclusion of that meeting, the supervisor and student will complete a form outlining any areas of concern or aspects of the research that need of improvement, and the supervisor, candidate, and panel members will sign the form acknowledging its contents. Any major issues that are noted will need to be addressed before candidature can be confirmed.

Further information regarding guidelines for the research proposal can be obtained from your supervisor or the Postgraduate Coordinator, but see also the UNSW [Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines](#) for the rationale for progress reviews, and the importance of developing an appreciation of constructive criticism.

3. Oral Presentation of Research Proposal (and initial experimentation)

You are required, between your second and fourth term of enrolment, to present a summary of your proposed research at one of the weekly Postgraduate Seminars. This is required so that you may gain experience in preparing and presenting your work before your peers and so that your fellow students are informed about your work. This 'proposal talk' should be around 15-20 mins in duration (and no more than 20 mins).

4. Mid-Candidature Presentation

At some point later in the candidature period (typically between your sixth and eighth term of full-time equivalent enrolment), you will be expected to present a longer and more extensive oral summary of your research at the Postgraduate Seminar. (For Combined students, this presentation is scheduled later in their candidature.) This mid-candidature presentation should be around 45 mins in duration (and no more than 50 mins).

5. Annual Progress Review (APR)

At the end of each year of full-time equivalent enrolment, the University requires every postgraduate research student to complete an APR; this review allows the Postgraduate Committee to assess whether your progress has been satisfactory, and provides you with an opportunity to formally alert the Committee to any problems that you have experienced or delays that have interfered with your progress. During the APR process, you will be asked to itemise your achievements for the year and the milestones aimed for by the next year's review. Your supervisor will also complete a short report on your progress, and will typically accompany you to the Progress Review meeting at which you will discuss your progress with a Review Panel. The APR will then be evaluated by the Postgraduate Committee to confirm whether progress has been satisfactory or not. If progress is not considered satisfactory, steps will be taken to try to get the project back on track. This may include suspension of part-time teaching and/or research assistance, and a break from coursework if in the Combined PhD/MPsychol program. Note that if the Postgraduate Committee finds that progress is unsatisfactory it may recommend to the Faculty Higher Degree Committee the suspension, cancellation or transfer (e.g., from PhD to MSc) of the student's enrolment.

The enrolment of all candidates in the PhD degree is subject to confirmation. Satisfactory progress, as assessed in accordance with the University procedures for confirmation of candidature between six and twelve months after enrolment, is required in order for the candidature to be confirmed. The APR at the end of your first year of (full-time-equivalent) candidature will be the **Confirmation of Candidature** review, at which progress is assessed against these requirements. Confirmation of Candidature requires that you have completed: Research Integrity Training (see point 1 above); the Thesis Research Proposal process (see point 2 above); and have attended the UNSW HDR Welcome and Orientation event (hosted by the Graduate Research School).

The Confirmation of Candidature review need not be at all extensive if your proposal has been accepted. However, the APR from the end of second year and beyond should be more extensive, being the only opportunity to provide a written report on what you have achieved. This report, and the proposed milestones, should prove helpful to you in moving toward a timely and successful completion of your research thesis.

6. Data Management Plan

If you will collect data of any sort, then you'll need a plan for storing the data. The University provides an online portal, [ResData](#), which helps formulate a data management plan, and provides a place for storage. Your supervisor likely has an existing method for storing and managing data, and so you should discuss this with them. For detailed guidelines on what is required when it comes to data management, then please go [here](#).

Facilities and resources

All **full-time** research students are provided with desk space and secure storage. Early in your candidature, you will probably share an office or lab space with one or more other students, though later in your candidature (at the writing-up stage) an attempt can be made to find you more private space. Note that if you exceed 16 full-time terms of enrolment (eight terms for MSc students), you will need to put in a request to the Postgraduate Coordinator to keep your desk-space. Additionally, **once you submit your thesis you will need to vacate your desk**. However, if further work is required on the thesis after examination, or if you want to use the post-submission period to work on papers, job applications, etc, then desk space and computing facilities for this purpose should be arranged through the Technical Support Unit (TSU, located in Mathews 138). Once the thesis has been accepted, however, the School can no longer provide such facilities.

A pigeon hole is provided for incoming mail (in Mathews 1511), and correspondence related to your work can be posted using the mail bag located in the same room. You may request stationery items through the Project Administrator (Mathews Level 16), however specific expensive items must be paid for from your research account (see below).

The School will also attempt to provide each postgraduate research student with their own computer and access to computing facilities, including free access to the local area network printers, campus network services, and to the internet. Access to telephones is considered essential only for research-related activities such as contacting potential research participants. It is the supervisor's responsibility to provide such access. Any additional, expensive items must be charged to your research account.

Student Research Accounts: The School will provide a total of \$4,000 for your PhD candidature¹ to be spent on research costs, including travel and conference/workshop registration. If you have research needs beyond these funds, you should discuss them with your supervisor who may be able to contribute from the funds that they receive for postgraduate student infrastructure, or to support a request for funds from the Head of School. In general, you will gain access to these funds after you have had your confirmation of candidature meeting, though exceptions can be made in extreme circumstances.

Conference Travel Support: In addition, the University operates a Postgraduate Student Research Support Scheme which provides successful applicants with a flat rate of \$2,600 to support costs for conference attendance. The scheme is administered via the Graduate Research School and information is available [here](#).

Please note that access to Conference Travel Support is currently limited due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This situation is evolving, and the Postgraduate Committee will keep you updated with regard to changes in access to research and travel funds.

Photocopying: Photocopying can be done on the School photocopiers in Mathews 1511 and 1010.

¹ Scientia Scholarship students will instead receive \$1,000 of research costs funded by the School, to supplement the research funding from the University per the terms of their scholarship.

Ethics and access to subject pools

Before beginning your research, you must have the relevant ethical approval to undertake such research. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that such approval is obtained, but of course it is your responsibility to undertake research in an ethical manner. Please note, however, that ethical approval is not automatic, and can sometimes take months to process.

First-year psychology students participate in research for course credit. It should be noted that the "peak" times for such participation are at the beginning of each term; at other times, participation rates can be frustratingly low. Please note that there are strict guidelines for accessing this subject pool and your ethics approval is predicated upon observation of these. Forms can be downloaded [here](#).

Conferences, publications and intellectual property

During the course of your research, you should try to write up papers for publication. Apart from the benefit for your later career, such papers can help you in developing your ideas. In addition, the feedback you will receive from the journal editor and reviewers may help in subsequent studies and in writing up the thesis. Presentations at conferences are also beneficial because they afford expert feedback on concepts and assist in discerning current trends in the field of interest. In normal circumstances it is expected that the candidate will be the first author on publications based directly on their thesis. If there are patent issues relevant to your research, then you and your supervisor should discuss these with reference to the relevant sections of the [Intellectual Property Policy](#).

Thesis submission and examination

About 2 months before you intend to submit your thesis, you must lodge a Notification of Intention to Submit (NOITS) with the Graduate Research School. For more information go [here](#). After lodging your NOITS, the Postgraduate Coordinator will request from your supervisor a list of nominated examiners. You may discuss possible thesis examiners with your supervisor. In particular, you may alert your supervisor to anybody who would not be an appropriate examiner and give your reasons. You should not contact potential examiners – this is the responsibility of the supervisor. The final decision regarding examiners is made by the Faculty Higher Degree Committee and their identity cannot be revealed until after receipt of their reports by the University, and then only with their consent. After lodging your NOITS, you will be sent information regarding the format, binding, and method of submission for your thesis.

Part-time teaching

Full-time students may be able to do up to six hours per week of undergraduate teaching (usually tutoring). If available, this opportunity should provide valuable experience as an instructor in psychology as well as benefits of a financial nature. However, teaching (and other part-time work) should be viewed as an activity undertaken in addition to full-time study, and should not interfere with progress toward completion of your research program. You should discuss whether or not part-time teaching would be advisable with your supervisor who will make a recommendation to the Head of School. Limits may be placed on teaching opportunities, particularly for students in the first year of their candidature and for students in a Combined degree.

Grievance procedures

If in the course of your candidature you feel that you are being unfairly treated or have any particular concerns, you should first consult your supervisor. If there is a breakdown in the relationship with your supervisor, you should approach the Head of School, a Postgraduate Coordinator, or the School Grievance Officer.

Note that the School has a postgraduate representative who may participate in staff meetings. Through your representative, you can convey to academic staff any concerns that you may wish to keep anonymous.

If you would prefer to obtain confidential advice independent of the School or Faculty, you can:

- Contact your [Candidature Management Officer](#), or the Research Candidature Manager
- Contact legal advocacy services at [Arc](#)
- Consult the:
 - Student [Complaints and Appeals](#) website
 - Student [Code of Conduct](#)
 - Student [Complaint Procedure](#)

Additional resources

Key Contacts

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/key-contacts>

Key Dates

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/key-dates>

Managing your Candidature

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/managing-your-candidature>

Scholarships and Financial Support

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/scholarships-and-financial-support>

HDR Counselling Resources

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/hdr/counselling>

Forms, Procedures and Policies for Research Candidates

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/forms-procedures-and-policies-research-candidates>

Thesis

<https://research.unsw.edu.au/thesis>

The information contained in this guide is correct as at February 2021. Prospective students should contact UNSW to confirm admission requirements and availability of programs. UNSW reserves the right to change any programs, admission requirement or other information herein without any prior notice. CRICOS Provider No. 000098G.