

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BOARD
FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY RESEARCH EDUCATION

Background

The nature and characteristics of a quality higher degree research education and the desired attributes and skills of research degree graduates are subject to ongoing policy and scholarly debate. It is unlikely that there will be any definitive closure on this debate. In such an environment this Framework should be seen as both evolving and flexible. The Framework sets out the features of a quality HDR education to which the university subscribes. As such it is intended to inform policy directions, procedures, pedagogical practices, debate and innovation in research education.

The Framework comprises six aims, each with a set of accompanying desired outcomes and examples of strategies for achieving the outcomes. (please note the strategies are not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive). It also identifies the key measures used to track progress on the aims. Some generic support and improvement strategies will be deployed across the university while others will be deployed differently in different faculties and institutes.

The Framework is one of four UTS documents relating to research education, the other three being:

1. The UTS Strategic Plan, which sets out strategic targets for research education and associated performance indicators for those targets.
2. The Research and Research Training Management Report which is a report submitted to DEST and which sets out strategic directions, progress on targets and other required DEST information on research education.
3. The Progress Report on UTS Research Performance, which is produced by the Planning and Quality Unit and reports on the position of UTS and its faculties on the key performance indicators in the RTS and IGS.

The Framework is intended to be consistent with the following:

1. The AVCC policy 'Universities and their Students: Principles for the Provision of Education by Australian Universities Section B, Guidelines for Maintaining and Monitoring Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Degrees December 2002, 15-25
2. Council of Australian Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies Statement on Skill Development for Research Students
3. Council of Australian Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies Best Practice Framework for Research Students (in preparation)
4. Joint Statement of the Research Councils'/AHRB'S Postgraduate Skills Requirements (UK)

Aims and outcomes

1. Research culture/environment

Aim: Students are actively engaged in research/academic communities, in the university and in their field.

One of the purposes here is to ensure that students are engaged with the research culture of their particular field or discipline, and with their communities both inside and outside of UTS. The University's distinctive values and approach to research education includes a practice-based focus which fosters interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research projects. In this context helping students to engage in a research culture requires building links between industry/professional and academic research cultures.

Desired Outcomes	Exemplar Strategies
Student presentations at conferences, seminars, and engagement in other forums both within and outside the University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • induction program on participating in a research culture • financial support for conference attendance • establishment of student conferences • a program to assist students with oral presentation skills
Student inclusion in regular and occasional academic seminars Student publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure students have access to regular seminars and talks from University and visiting scholars Provide assistance with academic writing skills and journal procedures
Sharing of ideas and research work among students and between staff and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer seminars and reading and writing groups, • establish a research student information dissemination mechanism • the development and use of online chat rooms and other forms of online discussion.
Engagement of students in policy and directions for research	Establish mechanisms to include students in the research directions of the university/faculty/area

2. Researcher skills and attributes

Aim: Students are provided with opportunities to develop the skills and attributes deemed appropriate for HDR graduates

Desired Outcomes	Exemplar Strategies
Development of appropriate research skills	Provision of training and advice on the scope of what constitutes research, research methods and design, data analysis, and information access and management.
An understanding of the research environment and a commitment to research that is sustainable, culturally inclusive and socially responsible Capacity to manage a large research project	Provision of information, advice and training in the areas of ethics, intellectual property, copyright, health and safety, research funding, research policy, and the commercialisation of research. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information, advice and training on project management • Advice on compliance with regulations and guidelines (eg. biosafety, IP, ethics, copyright etc)
Personal, employability and career management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information, advice and training in writing, presentation, and critique of others' work • Engage students in a discussion of career goals and strategies • Provide opportunities for students to work with others in the institution and the broader academic and general community

3. The management of candidature: policies, regulations, and administrative processes.

Aim: Policies, regulations and administrative processes promote quality research education

The policies, regulations and administrative processes in the University have a quality assurance and accountability dimension, but they also serve to support and protect students and their supervisors and others associated with the research being undertaken.

Desired Outcomes	Exemplar Strategies
HDR regulations and guidelines are clear and current and comprehensive Students and supervisors are aware of and have access to advice about all relevant regulations, policies, guidelines and procedures Students engage in the development of policy and procedures The relevant policies and procedures provide equal access to a quality postgraduate work experience. The policies and procedures adhere to system standards for HDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reviews of regulations • A mechanism for monitoring and acting on feedback • provide information on the website • encourage students to seek independent advice from the Students' Association • ensure regulations etc are part of the induction program Include HDR students and the representative body in decision making processes relating to research and research education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise diversity in research methods, forms of presentation, and claims to knowledge • ensure that individual supervisors and students are aware of support mechanisms for research students • provide targeted support for disadvantaged students Monitor AVCC and the Council of the Deans and Directors of Graduate studies policies.

4. Student-supervisor roles and responsibilities

Aim: students and supervisors are informed, understand, and can manage their respective roles and responsibilities and the function of supervision within postgraduate research

Much has been written about the nature of the supervisor-student relationship in postgraduate pedagogy. While it remains the core relationship, the evidence and analysis suggests that students should see supervision as only one of a number of supports for their research project. While the formal roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students are set out in the Code of Practice, attention needs to be given to managing the relationship so that it is professional and mutually productive. The involvement of others is important to assist the supervisor and student to go beyond the privatised space of one-to one-supervision. The supervisory panel has been one mechanism adopted to address this concern, but in practice the primary relationship remains the principal supervisor and student.

Desired Outcomes	Exemplar Strategies
The formal roles and responsibilities are documented and well understood The expectations of both the supervisor and the student are met Students and supervisors are aware the supports available beyond the supervisor Students are assigned to qualified and appropriate supervisors Students express satisfaction with the quality of supervision	Development of a Code of Practice which is distributed to new supervisors and students Mutual expectations of supervision and HDR candidature are discussed and agreed The induction program and materials should outline the supports available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for students to nominate appropriate supervisors • the process of allocating supervisors should be equitable and transparent • supervisors are registered Develop procedures to monitor student satisfaction

5. Supervision development and support

Aim: Supervisory panels develop the skills and attributes to support research students and are provided with the support and workload allocation to carry out effective supervision.

Supervision should be recognised as a form of teaching which is highly complex (with multiple responsibilities), intellectually and emotionally demanding, and time consuming. It is a site where teaching and research most obviously come together in academic work. The pedagogy of supervision is not widely

explored or even understood as such, but it is receiving more attention in the current higher education environment. The implication is that supervisors should be supported, assisted and developed in their supervisory role.

Desired Outcomes	Exemplar Strategies
Supervisors/advisors are active researchers	The supervisor register should only contain active researchers in the field
Supervisors/advisors provide timely and good quality supervision	Supervisory development to include access to current literature and thinking on supervision practice
Academics new to research education have the opportunity to develop their supervisory skills	Mentoring and induction programs for advisors and supervisors
Supervision is given appropriate recognition in the workload of academics	Workload formulae include supervision over a 46 week year
Supervisory/advisory staff have opportunities to share experiences and reflect on their roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish seminars for the discussion of supervisory practices • support staff to attend conferences other presentations on supervision
Procedures are in place to support and resolve issues for supervisors/advisors	Clear grievance procedures and staff assigned to provide advice.

6. Student progress and support

Aim: Students have the supports and resources necessary to maintain successful progress

There is a need to continuously monitor and improve student services and supports and to develop new and creative ways to deliver research education.

Desired Outcomes	Exemplar Strategies
Students have the resources and facilities to support their research and development as researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with information regarding university resources and facilities before they enrol • Establish a set of guidelines for essential resources for HDR students
Problems with progress or supervision are identified early and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular reports on progress • formal procedure for endorsing the research project • regular meetings with supervisor
General issues relating to the HDR student experience are monitored and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey students regularly • seek advice from student representatives • provide forums for identifying issues • develop exit interviews or surveys
Students complete successfully within the time frame for candidature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund programs to support completions • analyse examiners' comments • track data on student completions, time, retention rates etc
Opportunities are available for the development of innovative practices in research education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote forums which discuss research education and the nature of research/knowledge • develop links with research and industry partners to foster research education

Monitoring the achievement of aims

Aims	<i>Evidence/Measures</i>	Source of data
Students are actively engaged in research/academic communities, in the university and in their field	Publications	UTS Research Office, through publications data collection
	Conference presentations (external refereed, external non-refereed, internal)	UTS Research Office, through publications data collection, Faculties
	Seminar participation	Faculties: Number of attendees at Faculty-based seminars
Students are provided with opportunities to develop the skills and attributes deemed appropriate for HDR graduates	Provision of training, advice, information and opportunities for participation in a research culture	UGS on the basis of input from the Faculties, ELSSA, Library, as well as UGS program
Policies, regulations and administrative processes promote quality research education	Examination results	UGS Office
	Equity Statistics	Equity and Diversity Unit
	Cohort tracking of retention and completions	Planning and Quality Unit
	Exit surveys	Planning and Quality Unit
Students and supervisors are informed, understand and can manage their respective roles and responsibilities and the function of supervision within post graduate research	Dissemination of Code of Practice	UGS Office
	Research Student Satisfaction Survey	Planning and Quality Unit
Supervisory panels develop skills and attributes to support research students and are provided with the support and workload allocation to carry out effective supervision	Participation in supervisor development	Faculties and UGS
	Proportion of supervisors who are active researchers	Faculties
	Supervision as part of Faculty/Institute workload policy	Faculties
Students have the supports and resources necessary to maintain successful progress	Time taken to complete	Planning and Quality Unit

* these questionnaires are pertinent to more than one aim.

Endorsed by Academic Board Dec 2003 and UGSB March 2004