



Graduate Research School

Preparing for a Graduate Research Degree at UWA: Hints & Tips

Infrastructure Guidelines for the Support of Research Higher Degree Candidates

Introduction

The University of Western Australia is committed to providing infrastructure support of the highest possible quality for its higher degree by research (HDR) candidates: that is, to the provision of all resources that are mutually agreed by candidate, supervisors and School to be necessary for a viable and feasible research project that can be completed to a satisfactory standard in an appropriate period of time. Satisfaction with the University's HDR programs and the timely and successful completion of them are due, in part, to the provision of appropriate levels of infrastructure. Schools, Centres and Institutes play an important role in matching prospective candidates and their projects with available human, physical, financial, and technical resources and in the timely provision of those resources. For this reason, any academic unit enrolling HDR candidates must strive to attain optimal standards of resources for those candidates.

The support of HDR candidates has many components and a complete statement of what constitutes good support requires that each of those components be addressed. At a minimum, they include:

- the work of individual supervisors;
- the infrastructure support available through Schools;
- the institution's policies with respect to graduate research; and
- the extent to which administrative structures and procedures are designed to assist research candidates.

This University has already addressed many aspects of what constitutes good supervisory practice from the perspective of the school and individual supervisor (see: [Code of Good Practice for Graduate Research Supervision](#)). (NB: that policy is about both individual and school responsibilities. The *Guidelines for Graduate Research Supervisors* are about the individual supervisor.) The current set of guidelines is concerned with the provision of infrastructure support for graduate research studies at the level of the School/Institute/Centre and is designed as an ancillary to the *Code of Good Practice*, replacing the current *Guidelines for Minimum Allocation of Resources for Research Candidates*

1. Research Support Costs to be provided to HDR Candidates

An essential aspect of the management of graduate research concerns support for the direct costs of candidate research. The *Application Form for Admission to Candidature and Status* must make explicit reference to funding for the project. All research projects must be designed within the context of the resources that are likely to be available to carry them out.

The University, like other research organisations, can never promise that support will be available for any program of research regardless of cost. It is essential that costs

are considered carefully when decisions are made about research questions, techniques, and directions: this is especially important when any of these change during the course of candidature. It is also clear that sources of funds vary across disciplinary groups.

Nevertheless, it is assumed that when a School recommends acceptance of a candidate into the PhD or Masters by Research, it does so after establishing that funding for the direct costs necessary for the research project is available. Therefore, the direct costs of research must be taken into account when thesis topics are negotiated with prospective candidates. These issues are of crucial importance when a decision is made to recommend acceptance of a candidate who will be remote from the campus for the majority of candidature and when a candidate is proposing to amend his or her candidature to remote status. Typically, HDR projects cost between \$500 and \$100,000 per annum and the funding source for each project must be identified before commencement of the project.

1.1 Direct Costs

Direct costs relate to the specific project and will vary from candidate to candidate within a single discipline.

Examples of *direct* costs of a project include, but are not restricted to, the full costs of:

- access to resources and facilities at UWA, including consumables, necessary for the completion of the project;
- access to resources or facilities at other organisations in Australia or overseas;
- travel to complete fieldwork, collect data, or to visit libraries or other repositories;
- training in techniques;
- necessary coursework undertaken outside the enrolling unit.

Arrangements to access such facilities external to the School or University should be negotiated before commencement of candidature to avoid unnecessary delays and thus ensure continuity in the candidate's research project.

1.2 Indirect Costs

There are also *infrastructure*, or *indirect costs*, to consider as essential support of candidate research and these are defined as the provision of the following basic facilities:

- accommodation (e.g. laboratory and office accommodation, suitably equipped and furnished in standard ways);
- access to workshop services (e.g. machine tools and qualified technicians available to each researcher, according to need, for research);
- access to film or music editing facilities;
- access to a basic library collection;
- standard reference materials or funds for abstracting services;
- provision of computers (excluding access to high-performance computers or other specialised applications) and basic computing facilities such as word processing and other standard software; and
- use of photocopiers, telephones, mail, fax, email and internet services.

All parties involved at the School level including the Coordinating Supervisor and the Head or Graduate Research Coordinator must ensure that HDR candidates are only accepted to undertake projects for which adequate infrastructure is available for the candidate's project to be successfully completed. Most notably:

1.2.1 All full-time HDR candidates should be provided with/offered shared office accommodation that includes a sole-use desk, lockable filing cabinet and bookshelf facilities. If, at times, a sole-use desk is not available to every full-time candidate, shared use of a desk or other satisfactory, flexible arrangements should be negotiated between the School, the supervisors and the candidate. Schools should endeavour to provide part-time HDR candidates with shared office accommodation and at least shared use of a desk. It is acknowledged that some schools face challenges regarding space and accommodation.

1.2.2 With regard to security and safety, there should be 'after hours' (ideally 24-hour, 7 days per week) access for HDR candidates to their offices, labs or shared work space. 'After hours' work in any University facility must comply with relevant Occupational Health and Safety regulations. 'After hours' work in a laboratory may require more than one person to be present for safety reasons (that is, the candidate cannot work alone). See the [Occupational Health and Safety Unit](#) website for additional information.

1.2.3 HDR candidates must have access to on-campus IT facilities for data analysis, writing and information access. This might involve:

- the use of desktop computers, mainframe systems, or high performance computing time;
- networked printing; technical advice; and
- help with academic software supported by the University.

Schools may offer additional software support appropriate to the discipline and/or the project. HDR candidates need an appropriate level of access to research and communication tools such as the WWW and e-mail, including dial-in or wireless access. They should also be provided with a level of access to download electronic information from journals and other sources that is appropriate to their research project and their stage of candidature.

1.2.4 Remotely based HDR candidates must have reasonable access to University Internet services and other resources required to support their research and thesis preparation.

1.2.5 Schools should determine annually the levels of general maintenance and consumables that will be provided to HDR candidates, and inform them and their supervisors accordingly. Provision of resources, such as photocopying, printing, funds for research travel, outside mail, controlled STD or ISD telephone use and fax use, need to be commensurate with the requirements of research topics and thesis writing. Reasonable limits will vary from discipline to discipline, from school to school, and occasionally from project to project.

1.2.6 HDR candidates should be encouraged to present their work at appropriate national and international conferences. The Graduate Research School offers support for one travel grant to each candidate; the support available depends on whether the travel is national or international. It is highly desirable that Schools contribute to conference participation costs: it is acknowledged that the level of

support offered will vary between Schools. Ideally, PhD candidates should be supported at least partially by the School to participate in a minimum of two national conferences and one international conference during candidature, while Masters candidates should be supported at least partially by the School for a minimum of one national conference. Candidates should therefore be encouraged and supported to apply for external funding to participate in conferences. Some training in presentation skills should also be provided.

1.2.7 Wherever possible, Schools should offer suitably qualified HDR candidates the opportunity to tutor, demonstrate or engage in other professional development activities, within the guidelines on work approved by the University.

1.2.8 Schools should encourage HDR candidates to make effective, efficient use of library resources. This will often require participation in general orientation sessions and tours, as well as specialist courses run by the University Library and other specialist libraries. Research topics that will involve the acquisition of significant library holdings should be discussed with appropriate Library staff before the topic is finally agreed. If the acquisition of necessary Library holdings is not feasible, funds will need to be available to permit candidates to spend time at other libraries where the appropriate material is available. The University meets the cost of inter-library loans that are related to the research candidate's topic and approved by the Coordinating Supervisor.

2. Information to be provided to HDR Candidates

2.1 Induction

Candidates must undergo an induction process as soon as practicable after commencement of candidature during which they can be informed of School and University facilities and services available to them throughout their candidature. The Graduate Research School offers two formal inductions each year, one in March and the other in August. Each School should maintain a readily accessible list of services for candidates in hard copy form and/or on the School web site. The [UWA Graduate Research](#) website also provides information on many services, University policies relevant to HDR candidates, and training programs and seminars.

Because HDR programs are offered in such a wide range of disciplines at the University, there is considerable variability in the resource needs of candidates across the institution and it is important that academic organisational units clearly articulate what facilities and other support (such as travel for conference presentation) will be available to HDR candidates who enrol with them. Access to some resources such as the PSA/Convocation Travel Awards or Completion Scholarships may be only provided on merit by application and if so, this must be made clear to candidates.

There are additional formal induction and training requirements for many types of research. In many cases, candidates must have [completed formal courses](#) prior to the commencement of their laboratory work.

2.2 Early Meeting with Supervisor(s)

It is essential that candidates and supervisors consult prior to commencement of candidature or within a few days of commencement to discuss both general infrastructure support and project-specific support. This will minimise ambiguity in what has been agreed to at the commencement of candidature.

2.3 Provision of Hard Copy Lists of Facilities

Either as part of the school induction or as part of the early meeting with the supervisors, the candidate should be provided with a hard copy list of facilities available to all candidates **and** a hard copy list of resources specific to the candidate's research project. The list of facilities for all candidates should also be available on the School's web site and updated annually.

2.4 Ancillary Candidate Services

Schools should be aware of ancillary support services such as counselling, health, accommodation, English-language and academic writing support, careers/employment and child care, and refer candidates to these as required.

2.5 International HDR Candidates

Schools should advise international candidates about University provision of assistance with [English language skills and the FIRST program of support](#).

(This revised policy draws upon the University of Queensland Guidelines for RHD Support, the University of Melbourne "Infrastructure Support for Postgraduate Research Candidates: The Responsibilities of Academic Departments" policy, which itself references the 1997 UQ policy; and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) "2004 Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study".)

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