1. INTRODUCTION

These policies complement the University's Research Higher Degree Policies and Procedures (URHDPP) (see http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/research-higher-degrees.cfm) and must be read in conjunction with other relevant sections of the Student Related Policies and Procedures. The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC) is responsible for monitoring the of the URHDPP implementation. They address aspects of: eligibility to enrol as a research higher degree (RHD) candidate, supervision, progress reports, upgrading of candidature (Masters degrees to PhD) and outline some specific requirements which apply to RHD candidates in the School. The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC) is responsible for monitoring the of the URHDPP implementation. The policies reflect the increased accountability placed upon universities by the Commonwealth Government with the introduction in 2001 of the Research Training Scheme (RTS), with its emphasis on timely completions and an improved research training environment.

Appendices A–D (http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/research-higher-degrees.cfm) of the RHD section of the URHDPP define the responsibilities of the candidate, supervisor, Academic Organisational Unit (AOU/School), and University, respectively, in RHD candidature and supervision. In addition, the School of the Environment has developed complimentary procedures, outlined in this document, to ensure that the best possible procedures are in place for a successful completion of RHD projects.

2. IMPORTANT FORMS FOR RHD STUDENTS & SUPERVISORS

2.1. Annual Review of Progress

The Annual Review of Progress form is available for download at:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/graduate-research/progress-completion/annual-review-of-progress.cfm

It is the obligation of RHD students to meet all deadlines associated with their candidature. Written justifications are required for late submissions of the Annual Review Progress form.
2.2. Faculty Forms

Other forms for RHD students and supervisors are available at:


Forms include:

- Admission to Research Higher Degree - Application Form
- FSE Change or Addition of Supervisor - Application Form
- FSE Initial Review of Project Proposal & Literature Review
- FSE Submission of RHD Thesis for Examination
- FSE Transfer of Candidature or Change of Research Project - Application Form
- FSE Variation to Candidature - Application Form
- FSE Post-Graduate Student Funding Applications – Information & Certification Form
- FSE RHD International Conference Grant - Application Form, Policy and Report

2.3. Research Scholarship Forms

Forms of relevance to research scholarships (leave, intermissions and extensions) are available at:


2.4. Faculty Forms for RHD Supervisors

Forms for the supervisors of RHD students are available at:


Forms include:

- FSE External Status - Application Form
- FSE Nomination of Appointment of an Arbitrator
- FSE Nomination for the Appointment of Examiners
- FSE Recommendation on Application for Research Higher Degree Candidature
- FSE Research Student Maintenance – Guidelines
3. SKILLS REQUIRED & MAXIMUM CANDIDATURE ENTITLEMENTS

3.1. SKILLS REQUIRED FOR MASTERS BY RESEARCH DEGREES

Masters by Research Degrees generally have the objective of training students in research techniques, in critical evaluation of such methodology appropriate to their field of study, and in the application of the methodology by conducting a specified programme of research under appropriate supervision. A candidate for this degree should demonstrate:

a) Evidence of an original investigation or testing of ideas;

b) Competence in independent research or experimentation;

c) Thorough understanding of the appropriate techniques in the field demonstrated both by their application and a thorough review of the literature;

d) Critical use of source material, experimental results (where appropriate) and published works;

e) Appreciation of the relationship of the special theme to the wider field of knowledge; and

f) Capacity to present well-written work.

3.2. SKILLS REQUIRED FOR DOCTORAL DEGREES

PhD degrees provide training and education with the objective of producing graduates with the capacity to conduct research independently and at a high level of originality and quality. By the end of their candidature, PhD students ought to be capable of conceiving, designing and carrying to completion a research programme without supervision. The PhD candidate should uncover new knowledge either by the discovery of new facts, the formulation of theories or the innovative re-interpretation of known data and established ideas. PhD candidates should demonstrate a) to f) as for Masters by Research degrees; and:


g) a high degree of independence of thought and approach; and

h) a significant original contribution to knowledge.

3.3. ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Whilst there is no formal research skills topic taught in the School of the Environment for Research Masters and Doctoral students, it is essential that students avail themselves of training opportunities available on campus. Supervisors will help students identify training courses that provide these skills at University, Faculty or School levels. The Student Learning Centre provides Professional Development Programmes for all RHD students and you are encouraged to enrol in them. Please refer to the following Internet link for more information: http://www.flinders.edu.au/current-students/slc/
3.4. MAXIMUM RTS FUNDING ENTITLEMENTS

The maximum funding entitlements are **2 years full-time equivalent (FTE) for Masters candidature** and **4 years full-time equivalent for PhD candidature**. There will be adverse consequences for the University if candidatures exceed these entitlements. The maximum total period of intermission permitted within a candidature is 12 months. Under certain circumstances another 6 months may be granted as an extension (see Section 8).

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR ENROLMENT AND ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

4.1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The University prescribes that applicants, who wish to enrol as RHD candidates, must hold certain minimum qualifications. These requirements are outlined for each course in the Postgraduate section of the University Course Information Handbook (http://www.flinders.edu.au/courses/postgrad/).

Applicants for admission to a Masters by Research degree must normally hold an honours degree from Flinders University, or an equivalent qualification from another institution. Applicants for admission to PhD candidature must normally have one of the following qualifications:

- an Honours degree at 2A level or above;
- a Masters by Coursework degree with distinction average;
- a Masters by Research degree; or
- a qualification deemed by the Faculty Board to be at least equivalent

The Board of the Faculty of Science and Engineering determines whether the applicant’s qualification meets the admission requirements or whether the applicant has to attend additional qualifying studies. In special circumstances and notwithstanding the above mentioned provisions, the Academic Senate may accept enrolment of a person who has given evidence satisfactory to the Academic Senate of fitness for enrolment and whose enrolment is supported by the Faculty Board.

In certain circumstances, applicants who meet the University’s admission criteria for entry to PhD candidature with an Honours degree at 2A level (or equivalent) may be advised to enrol in a Masters by Research program initially, and will be advised of the requirements for upgrading to PhD candidature. Notwithstanding this, an applicant in this category who has obtained a competitive scholarship that only supports a PhD candidature may be admitted to PhD candidature with the written support of the Principal Supervisor.

Applicants who do not meet the University’s admission criteria for direct entry to PhD candidature but who have some evidence of research experience may be admitted to a Masters by Research candidature.
4.2. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Prior to an application for RHD candidature, the prospective Principal Supervisor and the Dean of the School (or nominee) must confirm that the candidate is acceptable and has access to necessary resources, including study and work space and facilities, as specified by the FHDC before the candidate’s application can be considered.

Each application for RHD candidature must include a statement (of approximately 500 words) describing the research problem, its background, the objective(s) and research methods. The statement must be agreed upon and jointly signed by the applicant and the Principal Supervisor.

Each applicant for RHD candidature is required to provide a written statement of his/her hours of paid employment, indicating how much of the paid employment, if any, is thesis-related. The FHDC will only approve part-time or full-time candidature when a candidate has at least 20 or 40 hours per week available for thesis-related research and study, respectively. A candidate who is in full-time employment may be admitted to full-time candidature only if a significant proportion of the full-time employment involves thesis-related research and study. Candidates are required to notify the FHDC of any changes to their employment conditions involving any increase in their hours of paid employment. The FHDC may require a consequential change to the conditions of candidature.

Overseas students must be enrolled as full-time students, but may be allowed to work on any paid employment for not more than 20 hours per week. However, individual scholarships have their own rules regarding the permissible number of hours of paid work by overseas students. For example, the International Postgraduate Scholarship (IPRS) normally allows overseas students to work for a maximum of 8 hours of paid work per week. Overseas students are advised to seek information about the amount of paid work permissible under their scholarship scheme.

External candidature (i.e. outside Adelaide and not at an affiliated institution) is permissible provided that the proposed Principal Supervisor and the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee can confirm, to the satisfaction of the FHDC, that the candidate has access to the resources necessary for successful and timely completion.

Each newly enrolled student must, unless there are exceptional circumstances, attend the University’s RHD induction program that is held in March and August each year during their first year of candidature. Students who are remote from the University will be provided with a video-recording and/or PowerPoint presentation of the induction program. Students unable to attend the induction program in their first year for a valid reason must attend the program in the following year.
5. SUPERVISION

5.1. REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPERVISORS

Section 7 of URHDPP (http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/research-higher-degrees.cfm) requires that a Principal Supervisor and at least one Associate Supervisor be appointed for each RHD candidate. In some cases, for example where the topic is multi-disciplinary, more than one Associate Supervisor or a panel of supervisors may be appointed to include other disciplines. Whatever the supervisory arrangement, the primary responsibility for the student’s progress must remain with the Principal Supervisor, which should be made clear to all parties.

A Principal Supervisor normally carries 60 per cent of the supervisory load of a student, while the remaining 40 per cent is carried by the Associate Supervisor, or shared by the associate supervisors, if there is more than one. The Principal Supervisor carries the responsibility of coordinating communication between the supervisors and the candidate, and for resolving any issues.

An Advisory Panel is responsible for monitoring and documenting the candidate’s progress. This panel consists of three persons - the Principal Supervisor, one Associate Supervisor and another internal or external expert in the field, nominated by the Principal Supervisor. Hereby, it is essential that panel members are aware of the time involvement associated with the panel’s duties. See Section 6 for more details on these duties. The Principal Supervisor must forward contact details of the Advisory Panel to the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee and the RHD student within 3 months after the candidature’s commencement. Any change in the composition of the Advisory Panel should also be reported.

Principal Supervisors must meet the existing URHDPP provisions, in particular that they should have a satisfactory record of postgraduate supervision. In addition, at least one member of the supervisory panel must have had recent (within the previous 5 years) RHD supervisory experience. In order to be a Principal Supervisor, a staff member (or person with academic status) must have current demonstrable and relevant research activity in the proposed area of study. For example, an active researcher should have published in refereed journals, have been a Principal Investigator on 5 major research grants, obtained patents or undertaken consultancies in an area relevant to the student’s research in recent years. In addition, Principal Supervisors must have undertaken the postgraduate research student supervision workshops run by the Professional Development Unit at least once in the previous 5 years. All new Principal Supervisors and co-supervisors are required to attend the supervision workshops before commencing supervision, or as soon as possible thereafter.

The FHDC will take account of the performance of Principal Supervisors and may take appropriate action where performance is considered to be unsatisfactory.
5.2. OPTIONS FOR RHD STUDENTS

If required, RHD students can apply for a change of their supervisor(s). Nevertheless, RHD students should discuss this intention with their supervisor(s) and/or the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee.

6. PROGRESS-MONITORING PROCEDURES

6.1. REPORTING METHODS AND DUTIES OF THE ADVISORY PANEL

All forms and reports must be submitted through the School Office. School Office staff will forward copies of documents to other parties. It is the obligation of RHD students to meet all deadlines associated with their candidature. Written justifications are required for late submissions.

It is the duty of the candidate’s Advisory Panel to review all written reports and to attend and review all seminars presented by the candidate. At the completion of seminars, the student should take part in a post-seminar interview with the Advisory Panel. For each form of assessment, the Advisory Panel must provide the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee with a written report indicating whether the standard is satisfactory, and whether the student’s progress is satisfactory for the stage of candidature. The Advisory Panel should discuss its deliberations with the student. Indeed, RHD students are encouraged to discuss their progress with their supervisors at any time. The Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee will report problems cases to the FHD.

6.2. ANNUAL REVIEW OF PROGRESS

For every year of candidature, each RHD student must complete and submit the University’s Annual Review of Progress form by September 30. Completion by the due date of the Annual Review of Progress is required to ensure that scholarships be renewed for the following year. Failure to complete the review may be grounds for preventing continuing enrolment.

The FHDC treats the annual review of progress very seriously, and failure to comply may trigger unsatisfactory progress proceedings, with termination of candidature as one possible outcome. The Scholarships Office sends Annual Review of Progress forms to candidates in August each year. If required, electronic forms are also available at:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/graduate-research/progress-completion/annual-review-of-progress.cfm

The forms must be completed by candidates, their supervisors and the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee (or delegate), if possible in person. This implies that the candidate must discuss his/her progress in person with the other parties. It is the obligation of the student to organise these meetings in time, so that the September submission deadline can be met. Additional procedures may be implemented by the FHDC in case of problems and/or unsatisfactory progress.
6.3. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTERS BY RESEARCH DEGREES

Within 6 months (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must complete an initial review comprising a project proposal, a literature review, and a research plan. This report should normally be about 3,000 words in length. The submission must include this report and the form “Initial review of project proposal & literature review”.

After 12 months (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must submit a written progress report. This report should normally be 500 - 1,000 words in length.

Between 12 and 18 months (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must present a progress seminar that may constitute the final seminar. The seminar must encompass all of the work carried out during candidature, together with a summary of any work remaining and a schedule for completion of the thesis within the maximum period of candidature. It is the duty of the Principal Supervisor to organize this seminar.

At least 3 months prior to submission of the thesis for examination and initiated by the RHD student, the candidate’s Principal Supervisor will notify the FHDC of the candidate’s intention to submit the thesis and the supervisor will recommend the names of examiners for appointment to examine the thesis. The identity of examiners will not be revealed to candidate until the examination process has been completed and unless the examiners have agreed to have their names disclosed to the candidate. However, before the appointment of examiners, students will be asked if they have any objection to any potential examiners.

No later than 2 months prior to the expected date of thesis submission, each student must present a final seminar unless this corresponds to the progress seminar. The final seminar must be attended by the Advisory Panel and a member (or nominee) of the FHDC. It is the duty of the Principal Supervisor to organize this seminar. In addition, each student must submit a final draft of the thesis to their supervisors.

Together with the thesis submission, RHD candidates must submit the form “Submission of RHD thesis for examination” which requires signed statements by the Principal Supervisor.

6.4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PHD DEGREES

Within 6 months (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must complete an initial review comprising submission of a project proposal, a literature review and a research plan. This report should normally be about 3,000 words in length. The submission must include this report and the form “Initial review of project proposal & literature review”.

After 12 months (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must submit a written progress report. This report should normally be 500 - 1,000 words in length.

Between 12 and 18 months (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must present a progress seminar. The seminar must encompass all of the work carried out during
candidature, together with a summary of any work remaining and a schedule for completion of the thesis within the maximum period of candidature. Under certain circumstances, the Advisory Panel may recommend a downgrade from PhD to a Masters by Research degree. It is the duty of the Principal Supervisor to organize this seminar.

**After 24 months** (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must submit a written progress report. This report should normally be 500 - 1,000 words in length.

**Between 24 and 30 months** (FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must present another progress seminar. The seminar must encompass all of the work carried out during candidature, together with a summary of any work remaining and a schedule for completion of the thesis within the maximum period of candidature. It is the duty of the Principal Supervisor to organize this seminar.

**After 36 months** (3 years FTE) of commencing candidature, each student must submit a written progress report. This report should normally be 500 - 1,000 words in length.

**At least 3 months prior to submission of the thesis for examination and initiated by the RHD candidate**, the candidate’s Principal Supervisor will notify the FHDC of the candidate’s intention to submit the thesis and the supervisor will recommend the names of examiners for appointment to examine the thesis. The identity of examiners will not be revealed to candidate until the examination process has been completed and unless the examiners have agreed to have their names disclosed to the candidate. However, before the appointment of examiners, students will be asked if they have any objection to any potential examiners.

**No later than 2 months prior to the expected date of thesis submission**, each student must present a final seminar. The final seminar must be attended by the Advisory Panel and a member (or nominee) of the FHDC. In addition, each student must submit a final draft of the thesis to their supervisors. It is the duty of the Principal Supervisor to organize this seminar.

**Together with the thesis submission**, RHD candidates must submit the form “Submission of RHD thesis for examination” which requires signed statements by the Principal Supervisor.

**6.5. PREPARATION AND REPRODUCTION OF HIGHER DEGREES THESES**

Higher Degrees Theses must be prepared in accordance with the rules outlined in Appendix E of the University’s RHD Policies and Procedures, available at:


In particular, Clause 1 of these rules specifies that the Librarian must be consulted for approval of the form of reproduction.
6.6. SUBMITTING A THESIS IN FORM OF PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

While the University allows a thesis to take the form of several published papers, the thesis must still include a comprehensive introduction and a unified conclusion. In addition, we strongly advise that papers be reformatted and that the notation be revised so that the thesis appears as a unified body both in terms of style and content. Typically, the literature review and the description of the context of the study are expected to be much more extensive in a thesis than is normal in a peer reviewed journal paper.

6.7. ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS

RHD students are encouraged to provide additional evidence as testimony of their research activities. This evidence may be:

- Manuscripts written by the student as first author (in draft, final or accepted form);
- Research grant proposal written by the student as chief investigator or co-investigator;
- Conference papers written by the student as first author;
- Conference abstracts with accompanying poster written by the student as first author; or
- Chapters of the thesis.

6.8. UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Additional procedures will be applied in case of unsatisfactory progress. Such procedures may include written requests by the Advisory Panel to the candidate to provide more evidence of progress and/or to propose a detailed work plan outlining how the candidate is going to address problems identified by the panel. Continued lack of progress or failure to satisfactory respond to such requests may result in termination of the candidature. The Advisory Panel must document their cases and provide details of such requests to the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee.

7. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

In case of any grievance or problems, students should discuss these in the first instance with their Principal Supervisor and/or the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee. This conflict resolution should take place well before submission of the Annual Review of Progress form. If problems persist, the student should report the case to the Dean of the School or the Dean’s nominee for an independent review of the situation.

8. EXTENSION OF CANDIDATURE

A candidate applying to the FHDC for an extension of candidature must justify the request by supplying a credible timetable and plan for thesis completion and submission by the end of the extension. The application must have written support of both the Principal Supervisor and the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee. A first extension of six months full-time equivalent may be granted to both Masters and doctoral candidates. Further extensions of
up to six months may be approved by the FHDC in exceptional circumstances and under specific conditions determined by the FHDC.

9. TRANSFER FROM MASTERS BY RESEARCH TO PHD CANDIDATURE

An application to transfer from Masters by research to PhD candidature must be supported by the Principal Supervisor and Dean of the School or the Dean’s nominee and should make a sufficiently strong case for upgrading. The candidate should demonstrate:

- Capacity to undertake work at the more advanced level in the form of draft chapters or papers arising from the candidate's project which have been published (or accepted for publication) in peer-reviewed journals;
- That the nature of the proposed research topic is substantial enough to warrant the expansion of the research project; and
- That the definition of the project is such that the candidate has a high probability of completing a doctoral thesis that will make an original contribution to knowledge.

In addition, the candidate will also be required to present a seminar as a component of the assessment. This seminar must be attended by the Advisory Panel and a member (or nominee) of the FHDC. The Advisory Panel will evaluate both the application and the seminar and report their recommendation to the FHDC.

10. TRANSFER FROM PHD TO MASTERS BY RESEARCH CANDIDATURE

Under certain circumstances, the Advisory Panel may advise a PhD candidate to transfer to a Masters by Research degree. It should be noted that this downgrade may have negative financial consequences for RHD candidates who receive scholarships.

11. COMMUNICATION WITH CANDIDATES

All email communication on RHD matters will only be send to official student email addresses. It is a student’s responsibility to check their email regularly.

12. OTHER COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

For legal reasons, all email communication between RHD supervisors, the Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee (or delegate) and the FHDC are confidential and must not be forwarded to other parties.

13. ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PHD PROJECTS

The University offers financial support for RHD students in form of Overseas Field Trip Grants and Conference Travel Grants. For more details, see:

http://www.flinders.edu.au/scholarships-system/

In justified cases, additional discretionary funding may also be available at School level.
Appendix 1: Acronyms and abbreviations used in the document:

Faculty Board: Board of the Faculty of Science & Engineering
FTE: full-time equivalent
FHDC: Faculty Higher Degrees Committee
IPRS: International Postgraduate Research Scholarship
RHD: Research Higher Degrees
RHDC: Research Higher Degree Committee (subcommittee of the SotE Research Committee) consisting of the HDR Coordinator and Deputy RHD coordinator.
RTS: Research Training Scheme
SotE: School of the Environment
URHDPP: University's Research Higher Degree Policies

Appendix 2: Useful contact information (as of May 2015)

Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee:

Prof. Adrian Werner
Room 314 Earth Sciences,
Phone: 8201 2710
Email: adrian.werner@flinders.edu.au

Deputy Chair of SotE’s RHD Committee:

Assoc. Prof. Gour Dasvarma
Room 329, Social Sciences North,
Phone: 8201 2429
Email: gour.dasvarma@flinders.edu.au

Faculty Higher Degrees Administration:

Mrs Jennie Brand, Faculty of Science & Engineering
Room 1013, Physical Sciences,
Phone: 8201 2515
Email: jennie.brand@flinders.edu.au

Policy approved at staff meeting on 24 July 2012
Internet links updated on 7 May 2015