The Higher Degree Research Qualifying Program aims to assist applicants in developing the necessary research skills to become eligible for entry to a Doctor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy program.
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Part 1 - About the program

The Higher Degree Research (HDR) Qualifying Program provides an alternative route for entry into a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) program. Entry to the qualifying program may be offered to applicants who have applied for admission to a PhD or MPhil program but who do not possess the required qualifications for admission to those programs. Direct applications for admission are not accepted.

On successful completion of the qualifying program, students may be offered admission the PhD or MPhil program subject to all other admission requirements being met as specified in the Higher Degree Research Policy.

The Higher Degree Research Qualifying Program does not constitute a degree program and does not lead to the award of a degree or certificate upon completion.

Approval Process

The procedure for recommending admission to the qualifying program is prompted by a decision by either the Head of Element or the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) to not recommend an applicant for admission to the PhD or MPhil program.

The qualifying program will be prepared by the relevant Head of Element in consultation with the proposed supervisors. The Head of Element will forward the proposed qualifying program details to the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) who is responsible for recommending the program to the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School. Once approved, the Griffith Graduate Research School will issue an offer of enrolment to the applicant.

Program structure

Purpose

The qualifying program will specify which of the following purposes it is designed to:

- qualify the applicant for possible admission to PhD or MPhil candidature, ie, provide a program of study of equivalent standard to at least Honours 2A (for PhD), or Honours 2B (for MPhil); and
- assess the applicant’s ability to pursue a program of research at the higher degree level.

Program content

The program may comprise up to 80CP of work, of which some fraction is supervised research work leading to a dissertation and some fraction is coursework or related studies. The balance between the research and coursework components will vary depending upon the applicant’s educational background and research experience.

The program will contain the following components:

Research component (normally a minimum of 40CP):

- will not include research methodology courses;
- include a dissertation which must be presented as a single extended piece of written work, the length of which will be specified in the qualifying program and would normally be 15-20,000 words *
- the assessment may include the presentation of a research seminar; and
- any research undertaken should be related to the research proposed to be undertaken in the later PhD or MPhil, if admission to either of those programs is achieved.

* Students may refer to the guidelines for the preparation and submission of the HDR Qualifying Program dissertation.
Coursework component (a maximum of 40CP):

• this may include courses in research methodology or topic-related courses
• courses should be selected from existing Masters level programs.

The description of each item of work included in a qualifying program will be recommended for approval on the form HDR Qualifying Program and will include the following:

• details of work to be done for the research component or course to be undertaken
• assessment methods and assessors*
• level of achievement required for each assessment item
• credit point (CP) value of each assessment item
• the time frame within which the work must be completed.

* No member of staff may be responsible for the assessment of more than 40% of the total credit point value of the assessment items in a qualifying program, and no more than 50% of a particular item of assessment.

**Standard of Achievement**

The grade for each item of work will be set keeping in mind whether the applicant is seeking PhD or MPhil admission after completion of the program, specifically:

• no less than Honours 2A (typically at Distinction level) for both dissertation and courses included in the program, if admission to a PhD is intended
• no less than Honours 2B (typically at Credit level) for both dissertation and courses included in the program, if admission to an MPhil is intended

**Part 2 - Program administration**

**Fees and charges**

The qualifying program is a full-fee paying program for both domestic and international students.

In some instances, domestic students enrolled in an HDR qualifying program may be eligible to apply for a FEE-HELP loan from the Australian Commonwealth Government that helps eligible fee-paying students enrolled with an approved higher education provider to pay all or part of their fees. For further information check the fees and charges information online.

**Entry requirements**

**Academic admission standard**

To be offered admission to an qualifying program, an applicant must:

• have completed a bachelors degree of at least three years of full-time study or equivalent from a recognised institution; or
• a coursework masters degree of at least one year of full-time study or equivalent from a recognised institution; or
• hold qualifications which are considered by the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School to be of equivalent standing; and
• have achieved a GPA of 5 (credit level) in the final two years of the bachelors degree or for the entirety of the masters degree, or equivalent.

Applicants who are qualified for entry into an honours or appropriate masters program will be required to demonstrate to the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) why they should be permitted to undertake an qualifying program.
**English language proficiency**

**English language requirements** apply to international applicants and other applicants whose previous study was undertaken in a language other than English.

**Other considerations**

In addition to the academic qualifications and English language proficiency required for candidature, the following criteria must be satisfied before an offer of enrolment can be made:

- the proposed area of research is appropriate for higher degree research and is consistent with the academic aims and objectives of the host element
- the host element can provide the necessary resources and facilities within its budget
- there are two qualified members of staff holding confirmed, continuing or fixed-term appointments of sufficient length for the purposes of supervision
- a suitable level of contact with the University supervisors will be maintained if the work is being undertaken away from the University where the applicant is in employment, sufficient time can be devoted to the work to ensure timelines and other demands will be met
- the proposed research does not reproduce research that has previously been submitted for the award of a degree or diploma
- the proposed research conforms to the University’s ethical guidelines on research involving humans and animals
- where the intellectual property rights of the applicant may be a consideration, a suitable agreement protecting the rights of the student has been signed. Should a student be unwilling to sign an agreement, the research proposal may not be approved and the student may be required to choose another topic in an area which is not commercially sensitive
- whether the use of confidential or sensitive material is justified the applicant has no outstanding financial obligation with the University.

**Leave, withdrawal, change of enrolment, fees and refunds**

Students who wish to change elements of their program content must discuss the proposed change with their supervisor and Head of Element, and contact the Griffith Graduate Research School to initiate the formal approval process. Students are subject to the University’s standard policies determining due dates for enrolment changes detailed in the **Student Administration Policy** and the consequent effect on fee refunds as per the **Fees and Charges Policy**.

**Part 3 - Support and resources**

**Supervision**

Supervisors will have been identified when the initial PhD or MPhil application was assessed. If the applicant subsequently is accepted for admission to the qualifying program, the Element of Enrolment and nominated supervisors will be responsible for supervising the student and monitoring their progress throughout the qualifying program.

**Research Ethics**

Students are expected to pursue their research in accordance with the University’s policies relating to experimentation on human and animal subjects, which are based on standards prescribed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC).

In order to decide whether ethical clearance is required, students should consult with their supervisor and complete the Research Ethics Scope Checker. Faculty based Research Ethics Advisers also are available to provide advice and are contactable through the **Office for Research** website.
The University expects that an application for ethical clearance will be made at the earliest opportunity. That part of the research involving animal or human subjects cannot commence until ethical clearance, or a waiver, is obtained from the relevant University ethics committee. Supervisors are responsible for advising students on whether ethical clearance is likely to be required, and for guiding the student through the process for obtaining clearance. An expedited review process is available for research involving humans.

The University and NH&MRC guidelines and application forms for ethical clearance are available through the Office for Research website. Enquiries may be directed to the Research Ethics Advisers based in the elements, and the Office for Research.

The relevant policy and guideline documents are:
- Griffith University Human Research Ethics Manual
- Griffith University Animal Research Ethics Manual
- National Health and Medical Research Council - Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes
- National Health and Medical Research Council - The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research

**Intellectual property**

The University’s general policy relating to intellectual property is contained in the document Intellectual Property Policy. Students should seek the advice of their supervisors or faculty Dean if issues arise relating to intellectual property.

**Part 4 - Assessment and completion**

**Assessment**

No member of staff may be responsible for the assessment of more than 40% of the total credit point value of the assessment items in a qualifying program, and no more than 50% of a particular item of assessment.

**Coursework component**

The Faculty Assessment Board will be responsible for approving the grades achieved in courses in accordance with the University’s Assessment Policy, and for forwarding the results to Student Administration (Exams and Timetabling) for recording on the student’s academic transcript.

**Dissertation component**

The supervisor will recommend to the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) at least two assessors to assess the dissertation. The supervisor may not be an assessor. In special cases, the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) may appoint an external assessor. Each assessor will grade the dissertation in terms of the following range of descriptors for performance:

**High Distinction (HD)**

Demonstrated complete and comprehensive understanding of the dissertation subject matter; development of relevant skills to a comprehensive level; demonstration of an extremely high level of interpretive and analytical ability and intellectual initiative

**Distinction (D)**

Demonstrated very high level of understanding of the dissertation subject matter; development of relevant skills to a very high level; demonstration of a very high level of interpretive and analytical ability and intellectual initiative
Credit (C)
Demonstrated high level of understanding of the dissertation subject matter; development of relevant skills to a high level; demonstration of a high level of interpretive and analytical ability

Pass (P)
Demonstrated adequate understanding of the dissertation subject matter; development of relevant skills to a satisfactory level; adequate interpretive and analytical ability

Fail (F)
Demonstrated inadequate understanding of the basic course content; failure to develop relevant skills; insufficient evidence of interpretive and analytical ability

Where the grades awarded by the assessors differ, the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) shall investigate and resolve the discrepancy. The following guidelines will normally be observed in dealing with discrepancies in dissertation marking:

- in the first instance, each assessor may be requested to reconsider their grade in the light of the report and grade submitted by the other assessors whose identity shall remain confidential;
- in the event of the discrepancy still existing, the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) may:
  - appoint an additional assessor, or
  - determine a grade for the dissertation based on an assessment of the reports
- where an additional assessor is appointed, the final dissertation grade shall be decided by the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) on the basis of the two reports determined by the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) to best represent the most appropriate academic judgment. The Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) may consult the Faculty Assessment Board in reaching this determination.

Students will not be permitted to revise and resubmit a dissertation for re-examination.

Appeals against Award of Grade
Students are encouraged to discuss with academic staff their performance in assessment items during a course.

Where a student believes that an error has been made or an injustice done in respect of the grade awarded for a course or for the dissertation, the student may request a review of the grade. This request must:

- be made in writing on the appropriate form
- state the grounds for the review request
- be lodged within 14 days of the date on which student grades are posted on the University’s web site.

The processes set out in the Student Grievances and Appeals Policy apply.

All requests for review of a coursework grade shall be dealt with by the Chairperson of the relevant Assessment Board who shall seek the advice of the relevant Course Convenor. Students will be notified of the outcome of the requested review of grade.

In the case of an appeal against the grade awarded for the dissertation, the student should address their appeal in writing to the Dean of the relevant Faculty.

On receipt of an appeal against the dissertation grade the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) may take the following actions:

- dismiss the appeal because the academic decision has been properly taken and the student has not presented sufficient argument to justify further consideration of the appeal;
- uphold the appeal and change the dissertation grade;
• request the examiners of the dissertation to review their assessment in the light of each other examiner’s comments and in the light of the appeal presented by the student;
• direct that an additional examiner be appointed, in consultation with the supervisor(s);.
• take such other action as may seem appropriate to resolve the final dissertation grade;
• refer the appeal to the Faculty Assessment Board for resolution. The Faculty Assessment Board may constitute a sub-committee of not fewer than three members to recommend to the Dean the outcome of the appeal. The Faculty Assessment Board sub-committee may make its recommendation on the basis of the argument put before it or may take additional action, including having the examiners review their assessment or appointing an additional examiner; and
• take such other action as may result in the resolution of the appeal.

If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) in response to their appeal, the student may lodge a further appeal with the University Appeals Committee (see Policy on Student Grievances and Appeals).

Students will be notified of the outcome of the requested review of grade.

**Completion of program**

When submitting the dissertation, students must attach the form qualifying program – Submission of Dissertation. Once the outcome of the dissertation examination is known the Head of Element and Dean/Deputy Dean (Research) will advise whether the qualifying program has been successfully completed and the student may be offered admission to PhD or MPhil candidature. It should be noted however that successful completion of a prescribed qualifying program does not guarantee an offer of MPhil or PhD candidature.