

HDR Candidate Experience Survey

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1.0 Purpose

This document describes Griffith's approach to gathering feedback about higher degree by research (HDR) candidates' experiences of HDR programs to ensure their quality and to inform program and candidature management evaluation and improvement.

2.0 Scope

This protocol applies to HDR candidates and Griffith staff who are engaged in HDR candidature management and program delivery.

3.0 Process

Griffith is committed to a University-wide approach to gathering feedback from HDR candidates about their experience undertaking their HDR program. While feedback from undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students is collected via the Student Experience of Courses and Teaching (SEC and SET) instruments, the primary method for HDR candidates to provide feedback on their experience is the HDR Candidate Experience Survey (HDRCES).

3.1 Purpose of HDRCES

The purpose of gathering feedback from candidates through the HDRCES is to:

- Provide a mechanism for HDR candidates to provide confidential feedback on the quality of research training and support and provide input to processes to enhance this quality.
- Provide an HDR candidate perspective to compliment the annual Element-level audit against the [Minimum Standard of Resources, Facilities and Other Support](#) overseen by the Board of Graduate Research.
- Encourage staff involved in HDR candidature management, candidate support and program delivery to reflect, in light of the feedback, on the candidate experience and the development of new and/or improved approaches to enhance this experience.
- Inform annual HDR program review in line with Griffith's [Procedure for Program and Course Review \(Section 3.2.2.2\)](#).
- Enhance HDR candidates' experience of research training at the University.

3.2 Timing of HDRCES implementation

Candidates are given the opportunity to provide feedback through the HDRCES once a year, with survey distribution typically occurring mid-year. Deans (Research), HDR Directors and HDR Convenors will be advised of the timing of survey initiation in advance.

3.3 HDRCES content

Candidates will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the following aspects of the HDR candidature experience through the survey:

- Resources, facilities and support
- Supervision
- Skills development
- Overall experience.

Data is collected using a combination of Likert-scale items for candidates to rate their level of agreement / satisfaction with statements, and open-ended items to elicit more detailed and specific feedback on each of the areas listed above.

3.4 Method of administration

The survey is administered online by the Communications and Surveys team. All currently enrolled candidates are invited to participate via email.

3.5 Interpretation of results

Interpretation of HDR experience feedback needs to carefully consider the impact of contextual variables on the scores obtained, and comments made, before conclusions are reached.

Staff responsible for candidature management and program delivery are encouraged to seek additional sources of feedback about the quality of the HDR experience, such as candidate focus groups, to assist in the process of interpreting and responding to the feedback.

3.6 Review and improvement

Groups, through the HDR Director, will consider survey feedback and consult with relevant HDR convenors and Heads of Element to identify and explore areas requiring improvement as well as areas of best practice.

Relevant central units, e.g., GGRS, IRU, GI, Student Life, will consider survey feedback to identify and explore areas requiring improvement as well as areas of best practice.

Groups and central units will report back to the Board of Graduate Research annually regarding examples of best practice, issues identified and intended solutions at the local level. This will enable consideration and sharing of strategies across Griffith to maximise the experience of HDR candidates.

3.7 Reporting outcomes to HDR candidates

Mean scores for the HDRCES overall satisfaction question are available to candidates from [Student Surveys](#) for the survey completed the previous calendar year. In addition, survey feedback is discussed with HDR candidate representatives at the [HDR Candidate Representative Consultative Committee](#) meeting following receipt of survey data.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 Board of Graduate Research

As the senior body within the University which makes recommendations to Academic Committee and advises the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), on strategic planning, policy, and quality assurance matters concerning higher degree by research (HDR) programs and candidature, the Board of Graduate Research (BGR)'s oversight of the HDRCES involves:

- Periodic review of survey content, structure and delivery to ensure it is responsive to significant strategic priorities and aligns with regulatory requirements
- Consideration of reporting on survey outcomes from Academic Groups and central units and provision of recommendations where appropriate on measures/initiatives in response to survey outcomes
- Monitoring University-wide implementation of measures in response to survey outcomes.

4.2 HDR Candidates

Under the Student Charter students are expected to provide constructive feedback on teaching, learning, research and other academic activities. Candidates are expected to respond to open-ended questions in a constructive manner, focusing on issues related to their HDR experience, and avoiding content of a personal or inappropriate nature.

4.3 Communications and Surveys Team

The Communications and Surveys team is responsible for:

- Liaising with the GGRS regarding survey content, timing and distribution to candidates
- Building the survey and putting together promotional content for HDR Portfolio Partners
- Working with Planning and Analytics to deidentify the data before sharing with GGRS
- Creating an annual results infographic in consultation with GGRS
- Maintaining and updating the survey [webpage](#).

4.4 Griffith Graduate Research School

GGRS is responsible for:

- Liaising with the Communications and Surveys team regarding survey content, timing and distribution to candidates.
- Communicating with Groups and other HDR Portfolio Partners, via BGR meetings, about the initiation of the survey process
- Ensuring production and dissemination of an annual survey results infographic, as well as dissemination of de-identified survey results to Academic Groups and other relevant areas, upon request.

4.5 Dean Research/HDR Director

The Dean Research/HDR Director is responsible for:

- Disseminating advice regarding survey timing/initiation to Heads of Element in advance of the survey each year.
- Reviewing HDRCES feedback, in line with their responsibility for fostering high quality research training programs and ensuring there are local processes for the regular review and monitoring of the performance of Group administered HDR programs.

- Ensuring Group data, including qualitative responses, are deidentified before any data is shared within the Group.
- Disseminating relevant HDRCES data to Heads of Element/HDR convenors.
- Reporting back to BGR, and Group PVC as needed, regarding issues raised by HDR candidates, improvements/initiatives undertaken or proposed to address such issues, as well as examples of best practice identified within the Group through improvements in candidate satisfaction year on year.

4.6 HDR Convenors

The HDR Convenor may be required to consider HDRCES feedback in consultation with the HDR Director and Head of Element to determine local-level strategies required to address issues and/or provide additional information regarding areas of strength/beneficial initiatives.

4.7 Head of Element

The Head of Element is responsible for considering HDRCES feedback relevant to their Element, in consultation with the HDR Director/HDR convenor, in line with their responsibility for achieving high standards of quality as indicated by student feedback, and for building a high-quality research training program.

4.8 Central Unit Director

The Central Unit Director is responsible for:

- Considering HDRCES feedback relevant to their Unit and reporting back to BGR regarding issues raised by HDR candidates, improvements/initiatives undertaken or proposed to address such issues, as well as examples of best practice identified through improvements in candidate satisfaction year on year.
- Ensuring data, including qualitative responses, are deidentified before any data is shared within the central unit.

4.9 HDR Program Directors

The HDR Program Director is responsible for reviewing HDRCES feedback, in line with their responsibility to ensure there are local processes for the regular review and monitoring of the performance of Group administered HDR programs.

5.0 Access to Data

ROLE	HDRCES DATA ACCESS
Communications and Surveys team	All survey data - Aggregated by Group, School, Citizenship, Attendance and Program Type.
GGRS	All de-identified survey data - Aggregated by Group, School, Citizenship, Attendance and Program Type.
Academic Group Deans Research Offices (Dean Research/HDR Director)	All de-identified Group survey data - Aggregated by School.

Head of Element	All de-identified Element survey data - For review and improvement
Central Unit Director	All de-identified Element survey data - For review and improvement
HDR Program Director	All de-identified survey data for relevant Program - For review and improvement
HDR Convenor	All de-identified Element survey data - For review and improvement
Board of Graduate Research	Annual survey response rate data and results summary infographic. Group reports regarding issues raised by HDR candidates and improvements/initiatives undertaken in response.
Other HDR Portfolio Partners	HDR Portfolio partners may request de-identified data relevant to their Element/Unit function from GGRS as required.
All University Staff/HDR Candidates/Students	Annual survey summary infographics via Higher Degree Research (HDR) Candidates survey (griffith.edu.au)
General Public	Annual survey summary infographics via Higher Degree Research (HDR) Candidates survey (griffith.edu.au)

6.0 Retention of Data

Electronic copies of HDRCES data for mandatory and optional questions and responses to open-ended questions are retained for five years by the Communications and Surveys team.

7.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this local protocol and related policy documents, the following definitions apply:

AQF qualification is a completed University accredited program of learning that leads to formal certification that a graduate has achieved the learning outcomes as described in the AQF.

Elements include Schools, Departments, Research Centres, Colleges, Institutes, other budget elements in which students are enrolled, as well as central administration and support units.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) refers to a Research Masters or Research Doctorate where a:

- Research Masters means a Level 9 qualification as described in the AQF and where a minimum of two thirds of the program of learning is for research, research training and independent study
- Research Doctorate means a Level 10 qualification as described in the AQF and where a minimum of two years of the program of learning, and typically two-thirds of the qualification, is research.

Program is an approved course of study leading to an award of the University (a higher education award). A student is admitted to a program, and on successful completion of all program requirements is awarded the degree to which the program relates.

Research comprises systematic experimental and theoretical work, application and/or development that results in an increase in the dimensions of knowledge, culminating in a thesis, dissertation, exegesis or equivalent that is formally examined. The term **research** includes original, exploratory, experimental, applied, clinically or work-based and other forms of creative work undertaken systematically to increase knowledge and understanding, deploying a range of research principles and methodologies. Research is specified in the AQF learning outcomes

for the Masters Degree (Research) and Doctoral Degree. The inclusion of research in a program is also referred to as the Research Component or Research Outcome

Staff means continuing, fixed-term and casual staff, including senior management, executive, academic, general, visiting, honorary and adjunct, conjoint appointments and volunteers participating in University business or activities.

Student Experience of a Course is a survey instrument to provide feedback from students to teaching staff and the University about student satisfaction with key elements of every course.

Student Experience of Teaching is a survey instrument that provides feedback from students to teaching staff and the University about student satisfaction with key elements of teaching.

INFORMATION

Printable version (PDF) Downloadable version (Word)

Title	HDR Candidate Experience Survey
Document number	2022/0000891
Purpose	To describe Griffith's approach to gathering feedback about HDR candidates' experiences of HDR programs to ensure their quality and to inform program and candidature management evaluation and improvement.
Audience	Staff; Students; Public
Category	Academic
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Policy advisor	Senior Policy and Analytics Officer, GGRS
Approving authority	Board of Graduate Research

RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Legislation	N/A
Policy	Higher Degree Research Policy Surveying of Griffith Students and Staff Policy
Procedures	Minimum Standard of Resources, Facilities and Other Support Procedure for Program and Course Review (Section 3.2.2.2).
Local protocols	N/A
Forms	N/A