



Higher Degree Research Admissions Policy

Effective Date: 2025.08.11

Last Reviewed: 2025.08.11

Version: v1 2025.08.11

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the principles and requirements governing admission to Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs at Alphacrucis University College (AC). It outlines the criteria for entry into the courses, and the processes by which applications are assessed and offers of admission are made. The goal is to ensure a fair, transparent, and rigorous selection process that admits candidates who are prepared for research and aligned with AC's capacity and research strengths.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all domestic and international applicants seeking admission to AC's HDR programs, and to all AC staff involved in HDR admissions decisions.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:
- 3.2. **Admission offer:** A formal offer issued by AC inviting an applicant to enrol in a specified HDR program under stated conditions.
- 3.3. **Compassionate and compelling circumstances:** Situations where a student experiences serious, unforeseen events that significantly impact their ability to meet academic or visa requirements. Compassionate and compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact on the student's course progress or wellbeing. These circumstances may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Serious illness or injury to the student or a close family member, supported by medical certificates;
 - b. Bereavement of close family members (parents, grandparents, children) [where possible a death certificate should be provided];
 - c. Family emergencies requiring unexpected and urgent travel or caregiving responsibilities;
 - d. Major political upheaval or natural disaster in a student's home country.
- 3.4. **Confirmation of Candidature:** A formal milestone (usually 12 months after commencement for full-time HDR students) where the candidate's research proposal is evaluated. Successful confirmation leads to full candidature status (refer to the Higher Degree Research Candidature Policy).
- 3.5. **Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE):** A CoE is an official document issued by AC to international students, confirming their acceptance into a course of study at AC. The CoE is required for the student visa application and includes key details such as course duration, start date, and provider information, in accordance with the ESOS Act and National Code 2018.
- 3.6. **Deferral:** An approved delay of the commencement of an HDR course after an offer has been accepted, usually for a defined period (e.g., one or two semesters) before the candidate enrolls.
- 3.7. **Domestic applicant:** An applicant who is an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or an Australian permanent resident (or otherwise not required to hold a student visa to study in Australia).
- 3.8. **Higher Degree by Research (HDR):** A HDR course is an advanced academic program that focuses primarily on independent research. In a HDR course, students conduct original



research under the guidance of a supervisor and contribute new knowledge to their field of study.

- 3.9. **International student applicant:** An applicant who intends to hold an Australian student visa and is therefore required to comply with Australian student visa conditions whether they are studying inside or outside of Australia.
- 3.10. **National Code 2018:** The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018) is a legislative framework under the ESOS Act 2000 that sets nationally consistent standards for the delivery of education to international students in Australia.
- 3.11. **Offshore applicant:** An applicant who is intending to study at an overseas location and not in an Australian campus or at an Australian address, and is not subject to international/overseas student visa requirements.
- 3.12. **PRISMS:** PRISMS means the Provider Registration and International Student Management System.
- 3.13. **Provisional candidature:** The initial enrolment status of an HDR candidate prior to formal Confirmation of Candidature. All candidates admitted to an HDR program at AC are considered provisional candidates until they successfully complete the confirmation milestone within the required timeframe.

4. Policy Statement

4.1. Selection and Offer of Admission

- 4.1.1. **Assessment of applications:** The Graduate Research School coordinates the evaluation of all HDR applications. Faculty with relevant expertise will review the applicant's academic qualifications, research preparedness, research proposal, and alignment with AC's research strengths. The assessment process aims to be fair, equitable, and consistent with AC's commitment to excellence in research training. All decisions take into account the applicant's merit as well as the availability of supervision and resources for the project. Meeting the minimum admission criteria alone does not guarantee an offer; admission is competitive and subject to the considerations noted in this policy.
- 4.1.2. **Notification and offer letter:** Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application by the Graduate Research School. Successful applicants will receive a formal Letter of Offer for admission into the specified HDR program. The letter will include details of the program, any conditions attached to the offer, and instructions for accepting the offer and enrolling. Conditions on an offer may include requirements such as completion of a pending degree, obtaining a student visa (for international students), or undertaking specified preliminary coursework training. Applicants must carefully review and satisfy any such conditions by the deadline stipulated. Unsuccessful applicants will also be informed by writing of the outcome of their application.
- 4.1.3. **Acceptance and enrolment:** By accepting, the applicant agrees to the terms of admission and any conditions set. Following acceptance, the applicant will be provided with enrolment information. AC reserves the right to withdraw an offer if conditions are not met or if it discovers that the applicant has not disclosed relevant information during the application process.
- 4.1.4. **Provisional candidature:** All candidates admitted to an HDR program at AC enter as provisional candidates. This means that during the initial stage of the degree, the candidate's capacity to carry out the proposed research is further evaluated. The candidate must undergo a Confirmation of Candidature process within the timeframe specified (normally within 12 months full-time) to attain full candidature. The conditions and process for confirmation are detailed in the Higher Degree Research Candidature Policy. Failure to achieve confirmation



successfully may result in termination of candidature. Applicants should be aware that their admission is contingent on progressing to confirmed candidature through this milestone.

4.2. Deferral of Commencement

- 4.2.1. AC recognises that circumstances may arise where an applicant who has received an offer of HDR admission needs to postpone the start of their candidature. This may take place on application to the Graduate Research School, and shall remain in force for a maximum of one year, after which time either the student shall enrol or AC may withdraw the offer of a place.
- 4.2.2. International students can only defer their commencement of studies on the grounds of compassionate or compelling circumstances. Students will be required to provide evidence of those circumstances as follows:
 - a. Where a medical certificate is provided as evidence, the medical certificate must:
 - i. be issued by a registered medical practitioner and include their professional contact details;
 - ii. state that the student has a medical condition and is unfit to study;
 - iii. state the length of time the student will be unfit to study.
 - b. Where a death certificate is provided as evidence, the death certificate must be certified and translated into English if applicable.
 - c. Where deferral is sought due to a traumatic experience, evidence must include a police report or report from a psychologist or qualified professional and must include the issuer's contact details.
 - d. In cases of mental health related conditions, the student must provide evidence of professional counselling and/or psychiatric treatment. This evidence must show that the student is receiving ongoing treatment for their condition. It should also show how and when this treatment plan will enable the student to resume study.
- 4.2.3. AC informs international students that deferral of their enrolment may affect their visa, and subsequently recommends seeking advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact on their student visa.
- 4.2.4. Where a deferral is granted, AC will report the change to the international student's enrolment via PRISMS as required by the ESOS Act (Section 19).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1. The following roles and responsibilities apply in relation to this policy:
- 5.2. **Applicants (Prospective HDR Students):** HDR Applicants are responsible for submitting a complete and accurate application including all required documentation. They must ensure that the research proposal aligns with AC's research areas and seek early consultation with potential supervisors. International HDR Applicants are also responsible for complying with enrolment and student visa requirements.
- 5.3. **Graduate Research Director (GRD):** The GRD is responsible for overseeing the implementation and review of the HDR Admissions Policy. The GRD also makes the final admission decision based on recommendations from the Graduate Research School and relevant faculty; ensures that admission decisions are fair, transparent, and aligned with AC's research priorities and supervisory capacity; and leads the policy's regular review process and recommends updates in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Policy.
- 5.4. **Graduate Research School (GRS):** The GRS is responsible for coordinating the entire HDR admissions process, including receiving applications, assessing completeness, and facilitating the review process. The GRS also provides pre-application guidance to prospective candidates, including advice on supervisor availability and research alignment; ensures eligibility and documentation requirements are met (e.g., academic records, research preparedness, English proficiency, visa compliance for international students); manages communication with



- applicants; supports applicants through enrolment and orientation; and maintains all admissions records and ensures compliance with policy and regulatory frameworks.
- 5.5. **International Support Officer (ISO):** The ISO is responsible for reporting required changes to PRISMS in accordance with the ESOS Act and National Code 2018.
 - 5.6. **Principal Supervisor (and Co-Supervisors):** The Principal Supervisor is responsible for engaging with prospective applicants during the proposal development phase. They are also responsible for providing feedback on preliminary research proposals prior to submission.
 - 5.7. **Student Onboarding Team:** The Student Onboarding Team is responsible for enrolling international applicants on PRISMS, and issue a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) letter, as set out in the International Student Policy.

6. Procedures

6.1. HDR Admissions Procedures

- 6.1.1. **Prospective inquiry:** The applicant contacts a potential supervisor to discuss the proposed research area and assess its suitability.
- 6.1.2. **Preparation of proposal:** In consultation with a potential supervisor, the applicant prepares a preliminary research proposal (using the [proposal template](#)) outlining the proposed topic of research, research questions, objectives, and an overview of the methodology.
- 6.1.3. **Submission of application:** The applicant submits a formal application to the Graduate Research School using the [HDR Application for Admission Form](#). All required documents, including the research proposal, are submitted with this form. As required, international applicants also supply evidence of English proficiency and any additional information needed for visa compliance.
- 6.1.4. **Application review:** The Graduate Research School checks the application for completeness and verifies that minimum entry requirements are met. The research proposal is then reviewed, and a decision is made based on the suitability of the project, the applicant's research capability, and the availability of supervision and resources. This may involve interviews or further correspondence with the applicant to clarify aspects of the proposed research.
- 6.1.5. **Recommendation and decision:** After review, the Graduate Research Director makes the final decision on the application.
- 6.1.6. **Offer issuance:** If the decision is to admit, the Graduate Research School issues a Letter of Offer to the applicant. If the decision is to decline, the applicant is notified of the outcome.
- 6.1.7. **Acceptance of offer:** The applicant accepts the offer in writing by the required deadline. For international applicants, upon acceptance of the offer in writing by the required deadline, the Student Onboarding Team will enrol the applicant on PRISMS, and issue a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) letter, as set out in the International Student Policy.
- 6.1.8. **Enrolment:** The Graduate Research School assists the applicant with enrolment and provides information on induction and orientation. Upon enrolment, the candidate's provisional candidature begins. A principal supervisor (and co-supervisor) is formally appointed if not already assigned at the time of offer.
- 6.1.9. **Scholarship application:** If the applicant is applying for a scholarship, the scholarship application form <https://fs25.formsite.com/AlphacrucisCollege/ymi7hnbcfv/index> should be submitted after the offer has been accepted.
- 6.1.10. **Deferral (if applicable):** If the applicant requests a deferral of commencement, the request is made in writing to the Graduate Research School either before or at the time of acceptance. If approved, the offer is updated to a later start date and the applicant will commence in the subsequent semester as agreed.



6.1.11. These procedures are to be conducted in accordance with the policy statements above. The Graduate Research School is responsible for ensuring that admissions are carried out fairly and efficiently, and for maintaining records of all HDR admission decisions. Any questions about the HDR admissions process should be directed to the Graduate Research School.

6.2. Appeal

6.2.1. If an applicant wishes to appeal the decision regarding refusal of their admission, they are advised to refer to the Student Complaint, Grievance Resolution and Appeals Policy.

7. Responsible for implementation

7.1. Deputy Vice President Research

8. Related AC Policies or Documents, Standards and Legislations

8.1. AC Policies or Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following AC policies available at <https://ww1.ac.edu.au/ppm/>

- 8.1.1. Higher Degree Research Candidature Policy;
- 8.1.2. Research Supervision Policy;
- 8.1.3. Research and Scholarship Policy;
- 8.1.4. Student Complaint, Grievance Resolution and Appeals Policy;
- 8.1.5. International Student Policy;
- 8.1.6. HDR Application for Admission Form:
<https://fs25.formsite.com/AlphacrucisCollege/uymmqruxfl/index.html>;
- 8.1.7. HDR Research Proposal Template:
https://fs25.formsite.com/AlphacrucisCollege/images/AC_HDR_Research_Proposal_Template.docx;
- 8.1.8. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Course Information Page: <https://www.ac.edu.au/awards/doctor-of-philosophy-phd/>;
- 8.1.9. Doctor of Ministry (DMin) – Course Information Page: <https://www.ac.edu.au/awards/doctor-ministry/>;
- 8.1.10. Master of Philosophy (MPhil) – Course Information Page:
<https://www.ac.edu.au/awards/master-philosophy-mphil/>.

8.2. Relevant Standards and Legislation

- 8.2.1. Higher Education Standards Framework: Standard 1.1, 4.2;
- 8.2.2. Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act);
- 8.2.3. The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018): Standards 2, 3;
- 8.2.4. Higher Education Support Amendment (2023).

9. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Vice President Research on a regular basis in accordance with the Policy Development and Review Policy. Any proposed changes will be tabled at the Research Committee for endorsement and Academic Board for approval. Revisions will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders upon approval.

10. History of approval and amendments

Policy owner	Deputy Vice President Research
Policy category	Research



Policy status	Approved
Approval Body	Academic Board
Endorsement Body	Research Committee
Approval Date	2025.08.11
Last Review Date	2025.08.11
History of Policy Amendments	
V1 2025.08.11	Aligned definitions with the HDR Candidates Policy (definitions of 'International Student Applicant', 'HDR') Deleted 4.1 Admissions Criteria Removed specific degree names where possible (PhD, DMin, MPhil) Additional clause regarding internal transfers

Add a new row for each version of the policy. Do not remove previous changes.

Appendices

a. N/A