

Guidelines for Postgraduate Students in the School of Biomedical Sciences

Higher Degrees by Research (HDR), such as a Master's degree or Ph.D., are amongst the highest degrees that can be obtained by undertaking supervised research, and imply that the holder is an authority in a particular field and can make a worthwhile contribution to the area.

A simple definition of the research required to obtain an HDR is that it makes a substantial original contribution to the knowledge or understanding of any field of study. It should also demonstrate your capacity to carry out independent research. "Independent research" is the basis of this type of education. Unlike undergraduate study, where lecturers give much of the material to you, an HDR degree requires you to take responsibility for:

1. seeking information;
2. undertaking the research;
3. presenting your results in a scholarly manner,
4. and, ultimately, obtaining the degree.

After submission of a candidacy application (after 6 months for full-time doctoral students, or 3 months for full-time Master's students), students will devote their time entirely to their research project, leading eventually to the submission of a thesis. The thesis constitutes one major component of your assessment. However, it should be noted that the thesis is submitted only in partial fulfilment of the requirements of your degree. Students enrolled for a doctoral degree must also demonstrate that they have independence of thought, and good verbal communication skills.

The School has several forums available in which students can develop and demonstrate their communication skills. These take the form of two research symposia run each year in conjunction with the WABRI Postgraduate Club (<http://www.wabri.org.au/postgrads/>), and are aimed to provide a space for students to make presentations of their on-going research, promote awareness of the research carried out in the School by all HDR students and foster a research culture. **Students are expected to participate in this activity each year and to present at least one seminar during the duration of their research degree.** Part-time students will also be expected to participate in this activity at least once a year.

The Division of Health Sciences also hosts the Mark Liveris Health Sciences Research Student Seminar, an annual event where postgraduate students in the Division give a public presentation of their work to the wider community. A poster session is also an integral part of this seminar. **Students are expected to participate in this activity each year either by presenting a poster (doctoral candidates in their 1st or 2nd year, or Master's candidates in their 1st. year) or by giving an oral presentation (doctoral candidates those in their 3rd year, or Master's candidates in the 2nd. year).**

Offshore or interstate students must demonstrate adequate participation in similar activities. Local, off-campus students are still expected to be involved actively in the above forums. **Students who fail to satisfactorily participate in School symposia or an approved alternative may be deemed not to be satisfying all the requirements of their degree and**

will be put on conditional status, which may lead to their enrolment being terminated. Conference support (both at School and Divisional level) will also be conditional on a student adequately participating in these activities.

In addition, there is an expectation that all HDR students will endeavour to attend the weekly *Life Sciences Seminars*. These seminars are co-organised by the School of Biomedical Sciences, WABRI and the School of Pharmacy and are held on-campus on Wednesday afternoons.

Some students may have a special circumstance that prevents participation in some way. These students should apply to the School Graduate Studies Committee (C/- Dr. Ricardo Mancera) to seek formal approval for their position. Other members of this committee include Dr Marilyn Bennet-Chambers, Dr. Steve Bottomley and Dr Elizabeth Watkin.

Curtin offers academic support programs to help students develop their study, language, writing and postgraduate skills. Workshops and other activities are provided through Student Learning Support: <http://learningsupport.curtin.edu.au>. The Office of Research and Development also offers seminars on professional development for students (and staff) on a number of areas (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/development.html>). There are a number of seminars and workshops of particular importance to HDR students:

- (1) Postgraduate Teaching and Learning (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/eptl.html>), which include seminars on the preparation of candidacy application and research proposals and on ethics of research involving humans.
- (2) Research Information Literacy Program: <http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/infoliteracy.html>
- (3) Library workshops: <http://workshops.lis.curtin.edu.au>
- (4) Computer training workshops: <http://computertraining.curtin.edu.au/courses/index.cfm>

There are other University services which provide assistance for specific needs, including the Curtin University Postgraduate Students' Association (<http://cupsa.curtin.edu.au>) and the Student Guild (<http://guild.curtin.edu.au>).

The School Graduate Studies Committee also reminds you of your other responsibilities as doctoral or master's students, which include to:

- become familiar with the stages and processes from Admission through Enrolment and Candidacy, to Examination and Graduation which are outlined in the Guidelines: <http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/hdrguidelines/overview.html>
<http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/hdrguidelines/contents.html>
- apply using the appropriate forms and in a timely manner for any leave of absence, variation of candidacy details/nomination of examiners, change of study mode, etc: <http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/formsummary.html>;
- submit an Annual Progress Report by the due date specified by the University Graduate Studies Committee: <http://healthsciences.curtin.edu.au/hdr/APR.cfm>
- apply yourself diligently and to the best of your ability to the successful completion of your degree;

- conform to the Higher Degree by Research Regulations, including the disciplinary provisions, of the University:
<http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/hdrguidelines/candidates.html>;
- be able to work independently without need for someone else to set goals and closely monitor your progress. Time management is a crucial skill to be practised if you are to graduate within the expected time. If you have difficulties in this area, it is important that you seek assistance both in compiling a timetable and sticking to it. This assistance may come from several sources, depending on your preference and needs, eg. any member of your Interim Thesis Committee, or Curtin Counselling and Health Services (<http://counselling.curtin.edu.au>). If you experience problems at any time during your research which are likely to disrupt your timetable, it is important to seek help as soon as possible;
- discuss your proposed topic with your Supervisor and ensure that you are both happy about it;
- discuss with your Supervisor your expectations of the supervisory role and establish a thorough understanding between each other about these expectations;
- be able to seek discussion and advice where there is a genuine problem, after first having made attempts to sort it out. Many students find that it is best to present both the problem and potential solutions and discuss these, rather than relying on someone else to come up with the solutions;
- present work to Supervisors and others in a legible format - preferably typed in double spacing to allow room for comments;
- make and maintain contacts with other postgraduate students, academics and other people relevant to your area of research. This helps prevent feelings of isolation and “working in the dark”. Fellow postgraduates can be a great source of support for all types of problems that are specific to this type of education;
- establish regular meetings with your Supervisor and prepare written material and an agenda before the meeting. Take notes during the meeting and preferably set up the next meeting at the conclusion of the current one. This allows your Supervisor time to consider the focus of the next meeting, and to read any material you have presented beforehand;
- advise your Supervisor as soon as possible of any problems which are impeding or may impede your progress;
- follow advice given by your Supervisor. If you disagree with it, ensure you discuss your disagreement fully so that you both know that you are not going to follow the advice, and the reasons why. You may wish to seek further guidance from members of your Interim Thesis Committee. More guidelines for HDR students can be found at Curtin’s Graduate Studies webpage and the Division of Health Sciences HDR webpage:
<http://research.curtin.edu.au/graduate/index.html>
<http://healthsciences.curtin.edu.au/hdr/index.cfm>

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