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Policy Document Approver	Research Committee
Responsible Body/Person	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Edwina Murphy
Next Review date	April 2027
Superseded documents	None
Related documents	<i>HDR Application Form</i> <i>HDR Change of College and/or Supervisory Team Application Form</i> Research Integrity Policy Research Active Policy Research and Scholarship Policy Supervisor Register HDR Candidate and Supervisor Induction Policy
Related HE Standards	3.2.3, 3.2.4, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 5.3.6

1. PURPOSE

To set out the responsibilities and duties of colleges and supervisors of HDR candidates of the **University**.

2. DEFINITIONS

Definitions for any words in **Bold** in this document can be found in the [Policy Glossary](#). The first instance of each defined term has been outlined in bold.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all colleges and supervisors of HDR candidates of the **University**.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The Australian University of Theology is responsible for the academic development and research supervision of its HDR candidates. This responsibility is delegated to supervisors employed by affiliated colleges and approved by the **University**. This policy sets out the responsibilities of the **University**, affiliated colleges and supervisors in ensuring appropriate supervision of candidates.

5. PRINCIPLES

Supervisory teams

- 5.1.1 The three (3) categories of supervisor are principal supervisor, co-supervisor and adjunct supervisor.
- 5.1.2 All HDR candidates will, from the time of admission to a course of study, have as a minimum both a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor.
- 5.1.3 **Research Committee (RC)** needs to approve supervisory teams in order to ensure that they have sufficient expertise as a whole to oversee the HDR

candidate's thesis.

Principal supervisor

- 5.2.1 Principal supervisors should be employed by the supervising college \geq 0.4EFT. Generally, casual or honorary appointments are not acceptable, and exceptions must be approved by **Research Committee** and the **Vice-Chancellor**.
- 5.2.2 Principal supervisors should have a doctorate.
- 5.2.3 Principal supervisors should have expertise in the HDR candidate's area of specialisation.
- 5.2.4 Doctoral principal supervisors must have **World Standard Research Activity** status (or have been research active under the previous policy) on appointment, as per the Research Active Policy.
- 5.2.5 Doctoral principal supervisors who do not have **World Standard Research Activity** status will be permitted to complete supervision of any current candidate but will not be permitted to act as the principal supervisor of any additional doctoral candidates until they attain the required status.
- 5.2.6 Doctoral principal supervisors will normally have successfully supervised at least one HDR candidate to completion prior to registration. Academic staff with **World Standard Research Activity** status who wish to be registered as doctoral principal supervisors must complete the intensive program through the Graduate School of Research. Research Committee will ensure that there is sufficient experience on the supervisory team as a whole.
- 5.2.7 Principal supervisors of **MTh (Res)** candidates must be **active in research and scholarship**, as per the Research Active Policy.
- 5.2.8 Doctoral principal supervisors may not be located off-shore unless a compelling case convinces RC to waive this criterion.

Co-supervisor

- 5.3.1 Co-supervisors may be employed, contract, or honorary staff.
- 5.3.2 Co-supervisors should have a doctorate.
- 5.3.3 Co-supervisors who are academic staff must be **active in research and scholarship**, as per the Research Active Policy.
- 5.3.4 Co-supervisors who are external to the **University** must have relevant **research expertise**, as assessed by RC. They need to demonstrate capacity to supervise in the candidate's specialised field of research through qualification and/or publications, industry expertise, professional accreditation and experience.
- 5.3.5 An HDR candidate may have two co-supervisors.
- 5.3.6 Co-supervisors may be located overseas.

Adjunct supervisor

- 5.4.1 Adjunct supervisors will have expert or professional expertise beyond the principal supervisor's abilities.

- 5.4.3 Adjunct supervisors must be available to meet with the candidate as frequently as required to provide adequate supervision.
- 5.4.4 Adjunct supervisors may be engaged on a semester or annual basis by the supervising college. RC does not appoint adjunct supervisors but may recommend or require they be appointed.

Supervisors' Primary Roles

- 5.5.1 The roles for each category of supervisor follow the structure outlined in the table below:

Supervisor Type	When acting as	Responsible for research content?	Responsible for academic administration?
Principal	Principal	Yes	Yes
Co-	Co-supervisor	As negotiated between Principal supervisor and candidate	No
Co-	Principal	Yes	Yes
Adjunct	Complementary expert	In area of expertise	No

- 5.5.2 The division of tasks between the principal supervisor, co-supervisor and any sessional adjunct supervisor(s) is to be facilitated by the principal supervisor in consultation with the candidate and other supervisors. This should then be approved by the supervising college Principal.

Principal supervisor's role & responsibilities

- 5.6.1 Principal supervisors are nominated to RC by supervising colleges on the HDR application form.
- 5.6.2 Principal supervisors of HDR candidates are the agents of the **University** in ensuring that the standards of its research degree are maintained and that candidates make steady progress throughout the term of their candidature. Supervisors should be aware of the level of academic performance and expertise expected in the degree, and fully cognisant of AUT requirements for the presentation of the finished thesis including the prescribed word length. It is essential that the work being done on the thesis is critically reviewed on a continuing pre-determined basis.
- 5.6.3 Principal supervisors should not allow themselves to be nominated to supervise a candidate unless confident of their ability to act as a supervisor of the proposed topic and assured that they are not required to supervise so many other candidates that their effectiveness will be impaired.
- 5.6.4 Principal supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their candidates are aware of **University** expectations of academic competencies required to be demonstrated in the thesis as well as the regulations concerning the time of candidature and the word length of the thesis.
- 5.6.5 Principal supervisors are responsible for monitoring compliance with their candidates' signed intention to abide by the stipulations outlined in the *Research Integrity Policy*.

- 5.6.6 Principal supervisors have an obligation to inform their candidates of the details of their own research and professional leave, any retirement plans or other matters that might interrupt the period of candidature.
- 5.6.7 Principal supervisors should be sufficiently aware of any special needs of their candidates so as to be able to report in an informed manner about the progress being made. Lack of progress may lead to cancellation of candidature.
- 5.6.8 Frequency of meetings should be negotiated in accordance with the nature of a candidate's research program. For part-time candidates at least three annual face-to-face (in person or via video conference) meetings are recommended. Frequency of contact is particularly critical in the early stages of candidature but should be maintained throughout. Principal supervisors are responsible for ensuring records of all meetings are kept.
- 5.6.9 Throughout the period of supervision, principal supervisors should provide constructive, critical, and (where requested) written assessments of their candidates' work to the candidate within one month of the submission of the work. In particular, serious attention should be paid to academic method and content. Matters relating to English usage, presentation, and argumentation should also be addressed at all stages of the research. A principal supervisor may recommend that a candidate take a unit in a field of knowledge, in the discipline of research methodology, or the technique of writing a thesis if the candidate evidences serious deficiencies in any of these areas.

Co-supervisor's role and responsibilities

- 5.7.1 Supervising colleges must obtain the approval of RC for the appointment of a co-supervisor.
- 5.7.2 Co-supervisors complement the role of the principal supervisor and may provide expertise in a particular area in which principal supervisors do not consider themselves adequately competent. Such expertise may be outside the tertiary context. Co-supervisors may also act as principal supervisor when principal supervisors are unable to perform their function. In such a case, however, if the co-supervisor is not situated within the higher education context, RC, in consultation with the candidate's supervising college, will ensure that the responsibilities of supervision are maintained by appointing an appropriately qualified, albeit temporary, replacement for the principal supervisor. Unless prevented by the demands of approved study leave or unforeseen circumstances the principal supervisor remains responsible for directing the research of the candidate and for ensuring that the candidate meets all AUT administrative and academic requirements.
- 5.7.2 Co-supervisors should maintain close contact with their candidates and their principal supervisors and be involved at all stages of their candidates' research plans.

Supervisor Registration

- Academic staff of the **University** will have their research status assessed on

an ongoing basis.

- Supervisors external to the **University** must submit a CV of their publications and relevant experience.
- Supervisors must undergo induction training through the Graduate School of Research. External co-supervisors are exempt if they can demonstrate they have undergone similar training at another institution.
- To maintain their registration, supervisors must undertake training through the GSR at least once every three years.
- Information on the research and training status of supervisors will be maintained on the Supervisor Register.
- Supervisors and HDR candidates are members of the Graduate School of Research.

Load limits

Principal supervisors

- 5.9.1 Normally, the maximum load limit of a principal supervisor who is primarily employed as teaching faculty at a candidate's supervising college is three (3) full-time candidates or part-time equivalent.

Co-supervisor

- 5.9.2 There is no load limit on co-supervision, but all supervision arrangements must be negotiated as part of workload agreements between supervisors and supervising colleges.

Non-teaching supervisor

- 5.9.3 Where a supervising college appoints a person to undertake only research and supervision of HDR candidates, the maximum full-time candidate load should not exceed 7 EFTSL.

Changing supervisors

- 5.10.1 Co-supervisors may act as principal supervisors on a temporary basis, for instance because of approved leave of absence or sabbatical, without informing Research Committee.
- 5.10.2 If a permanent change of principal supervisor is necessary for any reason, it is the responsibility of the supervising college to locate a suitable replacement and apply to RC to approve the new arrangement by submitting the *HDR Change of College and/or Supervisory Team Application Form*.
- 5.10.3 If a supervising college can no longer provide supervision for a candidate, the college should facilitate the candidate's transfer to another affiliated college and the *HDR Change of College and/or Supervisory Team Application Form* submitted by the new affiliated college.

6. RELATED LEGISLATION

[Higher Education Standards Framework \(HESF 2021\)](#)

7. REFERENCES

8. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	R&RSC	February 2017	February 2017	New, superseded earlier document
2	R&RSC	27 April 2018	27 April 2018	Reformat. Category changes in appendix
3	R&RSC	22 February 2019	22 February 2019	Appendix change from research active policy
4	R&RSC	16 October 2019	1 January 2020	Process for re-registration included
5	R&RSC	24 July 2020	24 July 2020	Updated template, added definition of Honorary
6	R&RSC	20 July 2021	20 July 2021	Aligned with changes to research plan and HESF (2021).
7	R&RSC Chair & Board Executive	18 November 21	18 November 21	Aligned with ACT Research and Scholarship Strategy
8	RC	7 October 2022	7 October 2022	Policy name modified; changes to research active status, supervisor details and registration.
9	RC	6 October 2023	6 October 2023	Remove reference to ACT Research and Scholarship Strategy, add Research and Scholarship Policy; co-supervisors modified.
10	RC	11 April 2025	11 April 2025	Update to university; clarifications.

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