Policy Document Administrator	Edwina Murphy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Policy Document Approver	Research Committee
Responsible Body/Person	Research Committee
Next Review date	July 2028
Superseded documents	
Related documents	*Annual Progress Report* *Confirmation of Candidature Portfolio Form* Grievance Resolution Policy – Students HDR Minimum Resources Policy Research Integrity Policy Research Misconduct Procedure
Related HE Standards	4.2.1
Related National Code Standards	N/A

1. PURPOSE

To establish the formal process by which candidature in **Higher Degree by Research (HDR)** courses will be confirmed.

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 commencing provisional candidates in **AUT HDR** courses – **MTh (Res)**, **DMin**, and **PhD** – and to Master of Professional Ministry (**MPM**) candidates who intend to articulate to a Higher Degree by Research course.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Confirmation of Candidature must be successfully achieved by candidates to progress from provisional to full candidature status. Normally, only candidates with full candidature status may enrol in semesters beyond the maximum period of provisional candidature. Candidates who are articulating directly from the MPM will generally complete Confirmation of Candidature as part of their admission to the course, and in such cases will have full candidature status on admission.

5. PRINCIPLES

Confirmation of Candidature (CoC)

5.1 Confirmation of Candidature is a formal and comprehensive process designed to encourage diligence early in candidature, and to review and plan progress from commencement to completion. The process aims to endorse work already accomplished and to provide support for the development of the candidate's plan for successful completion of the degree. The process

provides the opportunity for positive feedback to be given on progress and emphasises formative evaluation by way of identification of improvements that might be made. It also contributes to ensuring that any AI used by the candidate is appropriate and correctly referenced. Successful completion of the confirmation of candidature process will move a candidate from provisional candidature to full candidature status.

5.2 In order to confirm their candidature, commencing candidates in the MTh (Res), DMin, or PhD are required to satisfactorily submit to **Research Committee** a **Confirmation of Candidature Portfolio** which has been reviewed and approved by a college **Advisory Panel**. The Portfolio includes a **Research Plan**, Dissemination of Outcomes Plan, revised **Research Proposal**, Advisory Panel report, statement responding to the Advisory Panel, an Internship Agreement (if desired), and, if required, an **Ethics Protocol** (for theses including **Human Participant Research**). The Portfolio must be submitted according to the following time frames:

5.2.1 Candidates articulating directly from the MPM (usually to the DMin)

The CoC Portfolio is submitted to the Research Committee as part of the admission requirements for the award.

5.2.2 MTh (Res) candidates

The CoC Portfolio is submitted to the Research Committee no later than the end of the candidate's first full time semester (or part time equivalent). Note that MTh (Res) candidates will have provided a draft Research Proposal as part of their application process.

5.2.3 Doctoral candidates

The CoC Portfolio is submitted to the Research Committee no later than the end of the candidate's second full time semester (or part time equivalent).

5.3 As part of Confirmation of Candidature, the **supervising college** affirms that the resources required to complete the project will be provided to the candidate in accordance with the HDR Minimum Resources policy.

5.4 Completion of Confirmation of Candidature is required for all candidates to progress their candidature.

5.5 Failure to successfully confirm candidature will eventually result in termination of candidature. The Research Committee will determine confirmation and continuation or termination of candidature.

5.6 Candidates whose candidature has been terminated may appeal under the Grievance Resolution Policy – Students.

Research Plan

5.7 All HDR candidates should, in conjunction with their supervisors, complete a Research Plan in the first semester of their candidature, outlining the goals for the first twelve months and a timeline to completion.

5.8 The goals for achievement during the first twelve months of candidature may include such items as:

5.7.1 attending relevant coursework units supportive of the proposed research.

5.7.2 undertaking language study (e.g., Latin, French, German).

5.7.3 producing written reports—e.g. an annotated bibliography, a "map" of the thesis context.

5.7.4 preparing a literature survey with discussion.

5.7.5 drafting portions of the Research Proposal.

5.9 The timeline to completion will be subject to adjustment as the research progresses. Nevertheless, this timeline should identify major and perhaps minor tasks and indicate expected points on the timeline for their completion. This timeline provides the basis for review of progress by candidate and principal supervisor to be reported on in the candidate's Annual Progress Report (APR). An updated Research Plan will be included in the CoC Portfolio.

Dissemination of Outcomes Plan

5.10 All HDR candidates should, in conjunction with their supervisors, complete a Dissemination of Outcomes Plan in the first semester of their candidature. A list of conferences and journals in which a paper based on the research the candidate is undertaking may be presented, and identification of possible academic monograph publishers. Presentation at national or international conferences is encouraged, in addition to the required presentation of a paper of no less than 20 minutes' duration at an AUT college research seminar.

Research Proposal

5.11 Candidates must produce a draft Research Proposal which addresses the criteria listed in the Guidelines in the Confirmation of Candidature Portfolio Form.

5.12 The Research Proposal will be presented to the Advisory Panel, usually at a research seminar in the candidate's supervising college. The presentation will be a formative evaluation of the Research Proposal, attracting diagnostic feedback to improve the content of the various sections of the proposal. The presentation provides candidates an opportunity to crystallise their ideas and to receive feedback from peers and experienced researchers at an early stage of the work. Candidates should expect to be asked questions about their process and their use of AI, as well as the content of their thesis.

5.13 Normally, the Advisory Panel (comprising the supervising college Postgraduate Coordinator, the candidate's principal supervisor, and two experts in the research field, at least one of whom is external to the supervising college) attend the presentation of the Research Proposal. [Avoid having potential examiners on the Advisory Panel.] The candidate (via the Postgraduate Coordinator) will provide the Advisory Panel with the text of the Research Proposal and all other components of the CoC Portfolio (except the Advisory Panel report and statement in response) five working days prior to the presentation. Within five working days of hearing the presentation, the Advisory Panel should provide a written report to the candidate and supervisor for their consideration.

5.14 After receiving the Advisory Panel's report, the candidate, in collaboration with their supervisors, will update the Research Proposal and any other elements based on the report and any other useful feedback from the seminar.

5.15 The candidate (via the principal supervisor) will provide the Postgraduate Coordinator with a revised version of the CoC Portfolio, the Advisory Panel report and a statement indicating the responses made to the advice of the Advisory Panel, along with any other changes.

5.16 The Postgraduate Coordinator will circulate the revised version to the Advisory Panel who will confirm that the changes have been made to their satisfaction. If further changes are required, the process will be repeated until the Advisory Panel is prepared to sign off on the revised CoC Portfolio.

5.17 The complete CoC Portfolio—now including the approved versions of the Research Proposal, the Research Plan, the Dissemination of Outcomes Plan, the Internship Agreement (if desired) and the Ethics Protocol (if required), the Advisory Panel report and the candidate's statement of response—is then to be submitted by the Postgraduate Coordinator to the next meeting of the Research Committee.

5.18 If the Advisory Panel has concerns about the candidate's use and/or referencing of AI, these should be addressed by the above means before submitting the CoC Portfolio to Research Committee.

Confirmation of Candidature Approval Process

5.19 The Research Committee will assess the Confirmation of Candidature Portfolio and either approve or not approve confirmation of candidature.

5.20 Once confirmation of candidature has been approved, candidates undertaking Human Participant Research must submit their Ethics Protocol to the AUT's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) via their Postgraduate Coordinator.

5.21 If the Research Committee does not approve Confirmation of Candidature for any reason, including concerns about AI use and referencing, the Research Committee will provide a detailed report of the required changes and/or requirements to the candidate, principal supervisor, and Postgraduate Coordinator.

5.22 The candidate must submit a revised Confirmation of Candidature Portfolio and a statement of response to Research Committee's report to the Research Committee via their Postgraduate Coordinator.

5.23 The revised Portfolio will normally be submitted no later than the submission date for agenda items for the next Research Committee meeting, according to the Graduate School of Research website, but may be submitted earlier for review via email.

5.24 The Research Committee will assess the re-submission of the Confirmation of Candidature Portfolio, decide to either confirm or terminate candidature, and inform the candidate, principal supervisor, and Postgraduate Coordinator of the outcome within five working days of the relevant Research Committee

meeting or the date of submission, whichever is later.

5.25 Research Committee may, in exceptional circumstances, permit a further resubmission.

5.26 If candidature is not confirmed at first submission, if there have been concerns at the Advisory Panel stage about AI use, or if there are any other concerns which may prevent a successful candidature, Research Committee may impose additional requirements on the candidate.

5.27 If candidature is terminated, the candidate will be advised of their right to appeal under the Grievance Resolution Policy – Students.

5 RELATED LEGISLATION

6 REFERENCES

7 VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	RAB	4/11/2007	4/11/2007	
2	Academic Board	May 2010	May 2010	
3	R&RSC	May 2013	May 2013	
4	R&RSC	May 2015	May 2015	
5	R&RSC	October 2016	October 2016	
6	R&RSC	April 2020	April 2020	
7	R&RSC	01 October 2021	01 October 2021	New template. Separated from procedure.
8	RC	9 February 2024	9 February 2024	Procedure incorporated back into policy; addition of MPM; change to research plan requirements; edited for clarity.
9	RC	6 February 2026	6 February 2026	Inclusion of internships; clarification of contents of CoC Portfolio; opportunity for second resubmission.
10	RC	3 July 2026	1 January 2027	Additional references to AI and processes.

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