



RESEARCH ACTIVE POLICY

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Approved by	Board of Directors
Responsible body	Research Committee
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Superseded documents	None
Related documents	Research and Scholarship Policy <i>Supervisors and Supervision Policy</i> <i>Supervisor Register</i> Panels of the Research Committee Policy <i>Research and Scholarship Publications Form</i> <i>Request for Review of Research Classification Form</i>
Related HE Standards	4.1, 4.2, 6.3
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	All

1. PURPOSE

To ensure that all ACT supervisors of HDR candidates meet or exceed the threshold standards for supervision.

2. DEFINITIONS

ACT is the Australian College of Theology Limited.

Academic staff refers to staff of **Affiliated Colleges** engaged in teaching and/or research.

Active in research and confessional scholarship is the status necessary for **principal supervisors** of MTh candidates or **academic staff** who are co-supervisors of HDR candidates.

ACT Ranking Lists provide indicative rankings of Journals and Publishers and are maintained by **Research Committee**.

AQF is the *Australian Qualifications Framework*. Every accredited course in the Australian higher education sector must comply with the requirements of the **AQF**.

ARC is the Australian Research Council.



Co-supervisor is the **supervisor** of an **HDR candidate** who works alongside the **Principal Supervisor**, responsible for supervision of research content as negotiated and may act as the **Principal Supervisor** in the absence of the **Principal Supervisor**.

Confessional scholarship refers to academic publications (books, book chapters and journal articles subject to typical refereeing processes), that are about how the Christian faith is understood and applied to the churches, Christian organisations and other ACT stakeholders. It is faith-based “integration” and “application,” adapting the second and third Boyer (1990) categories to the ACT’s context and is a subset of **Scholarship**. It does not include popular writing, blogs, etc.

Director of Research is the officer of the **ACT** who oversees all research and research training.

ERA stands for Excellence in Research for Australia, Australia’s national research evaluation framework administered by the Australian Research Council (**ARC**).

Field of Study is an academic discipline or area of knowledge that is taught and researched within higher education.

Graduate School of Research (GSR) is the division of **ACT** which oversees research and research training.

HDR candidate see **Higher Degree by Research candidate**.

HESF (2021) is the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#).

Higher Degree by Research candidate is a candidate enrolled in the MTh, DMin, PhD or ThD degrees. Also known as an **HDR candidate**.

Peer review is the evaluation of research and publications by experts in the appropriate field/s.

Principal supervisor is the **supervisor** responsible for supervision of the research content and academic administration of an assigned **HDR candidate**.

Research, using the ERA definition, is defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. Research (as the discovery of new knowledge) is typically understood as Boyer’s (1990) first category of “discovery.”

Research Committee (RC) is the committee of the Academic Board which oversees research and research training within the **ACT** through the **Graduate School of Research**.

Research doctorate is any AQF level 10 degree.

Research expertise is the status necessary for external **co-supervisors** of **HDR candidates**.



Research masters is an AQF level 9 masters degree which is completed entirely by research.

Research output are publications, papers or other methods for communicating research to people other than the author.

Research Publications Assessment Panel (RPAP) is the panel of **RC** which makes recommendations on the quality of publications.

Scholarship encompasses activities concerned with gaining new or improved understanding, appreciation and insights into a field of knowledge, and engaging with and keeping up to date with advances in the field.

Supervisor is a person who supervises an **HDR candidate** enrolled in a research course of the **ACT**.

Supervisor Register is the **ACT** register of approved **supervisors** of **HDR candidates**.

TESQA is the *Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency*.

World Standard Research Activity is the status necessary for **principal supervisors** of doctoral **HDR candidates**.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all ACT academic staff and HDR supervisors.

4. BACKGROUND

The Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 clauses 4.2.3.a and B1.1.2 require all principal supervisors of HDR candidates and academic staff engaged in research student supervision to be active in research and (external) co-supervisors to have relevant research expertise.

Research, according to HESF (2021) B1.3.16, "leads to new knowledge and original creative endeavour."

Scholarship is a broader category than research and is defined in the TEQSA Guidance Note on Scholarship as

those activities concerned with gaining new or improved understanding, or appreciation and insights into a field of knowledge, or engaging with and keeping up to date with advances in the field.

Both research and scholarship are important for the ACT, but research active status is primarily based upon research output.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The Australian College of Theology values the contribution to knowledge through scholarship and the dissemination of that scholarship. Further, as we are engaged in research training, we are committed to the original contribution made by research.



As an institution, the ACT is committed to research that is 'world standard' measured using best practice indicators. It therefore requires its approved doctoral principal supervisors to achieve the status of World Standard Research Activity.

6. PRINCIPLES

General

- 6.1 All approved doctoral principal supervisors of HDR candidates must have **World Standard Research Activity** status (or have been research active under the previous policy), at the time of their appointment.
- 6.2 A doctoral principal supervisor who does 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.
- 6.3 **World Standard Research Activity** is defined as one of the following in the Field of Education 091703 Religious Studies in the previous 5 years:
- at least one (1) book of at least world standard research; OR
 - at least one (1) research article/chapter of at least 'above world standard,' **plus** at least two (2) research articles/chapters of at least world standard; OR
 - three (3) research articles/chapters of world standard **plus** at least one (1) confessional scholarship output (or another world standard research output).
- Completed supervision as a principal supervisor of a doctorate will be accepted in place of one world standard article/chapter.
- 6.4 Output will be assessed by a process overseen by the **Director of Research** as outlined below.
- 6.5 **Principal supervisors** of MTh candidates and **co-supervisors** of HDR candidates who are academic staff must be **active in research and confessional scholarship**, as determined on a case-by-case basis by **Research Committee**.
- 6.6 Co-supervisors of HDR candidates who are external to the **ACT** must have relevant **research expertise**, as determined on a case-by-case basis by **Research Committee**. 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.
- 6.7 In assessing the status of a potential supervisor, **Research Committee** may take into account publications which are forthcoming, provided that the final version has been accepted.
- 6.8 All supervisors of **HDR candidates** are listed in the *Supervisor Register* and are subject to the *Supervision and Supervisors Policy*.



- 6.9 **HDR candidates** and their **supervisors** are members of the **Graduate School of Research**.

Research Outputs

- 6.10 Only books, book chapters, journal articles and refereed conference full papers are eligible for assessment. Edited books, book reviews, conference presentations and other outputs are not included. Non-Traditional Research Outputs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis where necessary.
- 6.11 Each output should normally include the Australian College of Theology as a by-line. It is also appropriate for outputs to indicate the ACT Affiliated College of the author(s).
- 6.12 Academic staff (including external HDR supervisors) use the *Research and Scholarship Publications Form* to report their publications.

Books

- 6.13 To be eligible to be classified as research, books must be: be a major work of scholarship; be offered for sale (hard bound/CD-ROM/e-books, on subscription or fee basis); have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN); be written by a single author, or by joint authors who share responsibility for the whole book; and be published by a commercial publisher (or if only available online, and not published commercially, have been through an acceptable peer review process and otherwise meet the relevant eligibility criteria).

Book Chapters

- 6.14 To be eligible to be classified as research, books chapters must: be a contribution, consisting substantially of new material, to an edited compilation in which the material is subject to editorial scrutiny; if published previously, constitute substantial new knowledge and original research; be a chapter in a book that is offered for sale (hard bound/CD-ROM/e-books, on subscription or fee basis); be a chapter in a book that has an ISBN; be a chapter in a book published by a commercial publisher (or if only available online, and not published commercially, have been through an acceptable peer review process and otherwise meet the relevant eligibility criteria).

Journal articles

- 6.15 To be eligible to be classified as research, journal articles must have appeared in a journal that: uses an acceptable peer review process; publishes original research; is a scholarly publication; and has an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). In general, the journal will have appeared in a previous ERA list.

Refereed Conference full papers

- 6.16 To be eligible to be classified as research, refereed conference papers must have: been published in full; been through an acceptable peer review



process; and been presented at a conference, workshop or seminar of national or international significance.

Assessment Process

- 6.17 The Research Department will individually assess each output submitted to the repository and classify it as either **Research** or **Confessional Scholarship**. A judgement will be made as to whether the output type best fits within the Boyer (1990) category of 'discovery' (and is therefore classified as **Research**), or best fits within the categories of 'integration' and 'application' (and is therefore classified as **Confessional Scholarship**). An output will be judged as **Research** where it demonstrates substantively new knowledge in keeping with the ERA definition (this can include cases of synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative).
- 6.18 The assessment of outputs by the Research Department is independent of the author of the output. Where a member of the Research Department is an author of an output, they will not make an assessment of their output.
- 6.19 **ACT Ranking Lists** provide a guide to journals and publishers that are more likely to publish research, however, these Lists are not the primary basis for a decision about classification as **Research** or **Confessional Scholarship**. Outputs designed to inform (ministry) practitioners on existing knowledge in a professional field are unlikely to be classified as **Research**.
- 6.20 Research output will be further assessed for their level of research excellence as at world standard (3), above world standard (4), or well above world standard (5), based on the research quality of the output and using **ACT Ranking Lists** as a guide.

Review

- 6.21 Affiliated staff may request that the **Research Publications Assessment Panel** review the classification of their publications and make a recommendation to **Research Committee**. Any changes to research output classification and/or research active status as a result of **Research Committee's** decision will be recorded by the Research Department.

Reporting

- 6.22 While the ACT records and assesses the outputs of both **academic staff** (including honorary staff) and external HDR supervisors in order to monitor research active status for supervision purposes, outputs of HDR supervisors whose primary affiliation is elsewhere will not be included in ACT figures.

7. RELATED LEGISLATION

[Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#)

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



[Higher Education Support Act \(HESA\) 2003](#)

8. REFERENCES

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2018\)](#)

[Australian Council of Graduate Research, Guidelines for Quality Graduate Research Supervision \(2021\)](#)

[TEQSA Guidance Note on Scholarship](#)

[TEQSA Guidance Note on Research and Research Training](#)

9. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	R&RSC	19 November 2007	19 November 2007	new
2	R&RSC	2 May 2008	2 May 2008	
3	R&RSC	17 April 2009	17 April 2009	
4	R&RSC	22 February 2013	22 February 2013	
5	R&RSC	8 May 2015	8 May 2015	
6	R&RSC	28 April 2017	28 April 2017	Reformat and restructure, updated due to new standards
7	R&RSC	27 April 2018	27 April 2018	Output categories removed and changed, other minor changes
8	R&RSC	22 February 2019	22 February 2019	Added doctoral option for co-supervisors
9	R&RSC	20 July 2021	20 July 2021	Brought into compliance with HESF (2021)
10	R&RSC	01 October 2021	01 October 2021	Amendment to clause 6.5
11	R&RSC Chair & Board Executive	17 November 2021	17 November 2021	Aligned with ACT Research and Scholarship Strategy
12	RC	7 October 2022	7 October 2022	New category of World Standard Research Activity, clarification of requirements



13	Board of Directors	5 June 2023	5 June 2023	Process for assessing and reporting outputs integrated and clarified
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