

# Higher Degree by Research Program Accreditation - Academic Policy

## 1. Purpose of policy

The University is registered in the Australian University provider category and is authorised under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* to self-accredit each course of study that leads to a higher education award that it offers or confers.

Accreditation at the University of the Sunshine Coast is a determination made by Academic Board. The University separates academic quality assurance of its curriculum from the managerial decisions regarding the development and offering of that curriculum.

The following policy provides the broad framework for:

- (a) accreditation of higher degree by research (HDR) programs that lead to a qualification awarded by the University of the Sunshine Coast
- (b) approval of changes to or discontinuation of HDR programs
- (c) the associated responsibilities.

## 2. Policy scope and application

This policy applies to all HDR programs offered by the University of the Sunshine Coast, that is, Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees.

## 3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of terms for policies and procedures.

## 4. Program development and accreditation

### 4.1 Approval to develop a new HDR program

4.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor and President or delegate will approve a HDR program for development and for offering if a business case demonstrates that it contributes to the University's strategic direction and financial sustainability.

### 4.2 Criteria for accreditation

A HDR program may be accredited by Academic Board only if it:

- (a) advances or is consistent with the strategic directions of the University
- (b) meets the requirements and guidelines for award of a higher education qualification consistent with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- (c) is comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a similar HDR program at the same level in a similar field offered by Australian universities
- (d) is consistent with relevant University policies and procedures
- (e) has been designed, developed, documented and considered in accordance with procedural requirements for HDR program accreditation associated with this policy

### 4.3 Conditions of continuing to offer a HDR program

A HDR program, once accredited, continues to be offered on condition that:

#### APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Academic Board

#### RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

#### DESIGNATED OFFICER

Dean, Graduate Research

#### FIRST APPROVED

1 October 2013

#### LAST AMENDED

31 October 2019

#### REVIEW DATE

31 October 2026

#### STATUS

Active

(a) no changes are made to the degree unless those changes have been progressed and approved consistent with this policy and associated procedures;

(b) the HDR program is formally reviewed at least every seven years from the date of initial offer and a review report is presented for consideration by the Academic Board; and the Academic Board is satisfied that appropriate actions are in place to address any recommendations in the review report; and

(c) the Vice-Chancellor and President or delegate is satisfied that the degree continues to be viable and does not pose any unacceptable risk to the University.

## 5. Approval to change to HDR programs

5.1 Changes to accredited HDR programs must be designed, developed, documented and progressed in accordance with the procedural requirements associated with this policy.

5.2 Changes that relate to the academic quality of the HDR programs are approved by the Academic Board on the advice of the Research Degrees Committee. If the changes relate to the degree's viability or management, these are approved by the Vice-Chancellor and President or delegate, who may seek advice from University Executive. The two processes are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

5.3 In granting approval for a change to a HDR program, the approval authority must be satisfied that the change will not compromise the academic integrity of the HDR program concerned.

## 6. Approval to discontinue HDR programs

6.1 Proposals for discontinuation of accredited HDR programs must be developed, documented and progressed in accordance with the procedural requirements associated with this policy.

6.2 The Vice-Chancellor and President or delegate approves:

(a) the discontinuation of an accredited HDR program

(b) specific transition arrangements for students enrolled in any HDR program that is to be discontinued.

## 7. Expedited accreditation or approval

7.1 Under exceptional circumstances, the accreditation of a HDR program or changes to an accredited HDR program may be expedited.

7.2 Proposals for expedited accreditation or approval must be documented and progressed in accordance with the relevant procedural requirements associated with this policy.

## 8. Authorities/Responsibilities

The following authorities are delegated under this policy:

ACTIVITY	UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE
Approve a HDR program for development and for offering.	Vice-Chancellor and President or delegate
Approve changes to HDR programs, where changes relate to the degree's viability or management.	
Provide leadership and management of HDR program accreditation for the University.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Approve expedited accreditation or approval processes to be followed in specific instances.	
Provide leadership and management of University-wide HDR program.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Provide leadership and management of HDR program accreditation at School level.	Heads of School
Accredit new HDR program.	Academic Board
Approve changes to accredited HDR program, where changes relate to the academic quality of the degree.	
Approve new courses within a HDR program.	Program and Course Committee

Provide advice and recommendations to the Academic Board on matters relating to accreditation of HDR programs.

Research Degrees Committee

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END

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#### RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Coursework Curriculum - Academic Policy
- Higher Degree by Research Program Accreditation - Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy

#### LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Higher Degree by Research Program Accreditation - Procedures

#### SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

- Higher Degree by Research Accreditation - Academic Policy

#### RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011 (Cth)
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)