

RESEARCH SUPERVISION AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

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1.0 Purpose

This policy outlines the protocols for supervision and feedback on academic progress for candidates undertaking research at EIT.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all EIT's higher education candidates enrolled in courses that have a supervised research thesis component. It sets out the responsibilities of research supervisors and associated staff, and candidates undertaking research as part of their coursework studies and higher degree research courses.

3.0 Objectives

EIT is committed to maintaining high standards of excellence in research supervision. The objectives of this policy are to:

- ensure that postgraduate coursework candidates undertaking research theses and higher degree research candidates are provided with appropriate supervision and feedback on progress
- outline the roles of supervisors and candidates
- ensure that the research meets the standards of the Australian Code of Responsible Conduct of Research

4.0 Implementation

This policy is to be implemented by the Dean, who is responsible for ensuring that appropriate research supervisors are appointed to research candidates, and that higher degree research (generally those undertaking professional doctorates) candidates and master's degree candidates undertaking research theses receive appropriate and timely feedback on their research.

The Dean will report to the Research Committee which has oversight of research at EIT, and is a sub-committee of the Academic Board.

5.0 Supervision

Research supervisors must hold appropriate qualifications at or above the level of the course they are

supervising and have experience in research supervision according to the supervisory levels listed below. Potential supervisors must be registered and approved by the Research Committee, who will ensure that appropriate supervisors are appointed. A team of at least two supervisors appointed by the Research Committee will supervise all candidates, and will consist of a Principal Supervisor and either an Assistant Supervisor or an Associate Supervisor.

5.1 Supervisor Qualifications and Experience

Principal Supervisors must:

- Hold a PhD in Engineering or in an associated technology or educational field
- Be actively involved in research
- Be a staff member of EIT
- Demonstrate experience in supervision of postgraduate research candidates of at least three years
- Be experienced in the sub-discipline area of the candidate's area of research
- Be available to supervise the candidate on a regular basis for the duration of their candidature

Assistant Supervisors must:

- Hold a PhD in Engineering or in an associated technology or educational field
- Be a staff member of EIT
- Demonstrate experience in supervision of research candidates of at least one year or be in the process of being mentored by an experienced research supervisor
- Demonstrate professional engineering expertise in the candidate's area of research

Associate Supervisors must:

- Hold a PhD in Engineering or in an associated technology or educational field
- Be external to EIT
- Demonstrate professional engineering expertise in the candidate's area of research
- Value-add and be complementary to the Principal Supervisor

5.2 Supervisor Roles

- The Principal Supervisor has overall responsibility for supervision of the candidate and for leading any other appointed supervisors.
- The Assistant Supervisor will work closely with the Principal Supervisor to assist in guiding and supervising the candidate.
- The Associate Supervisor will work closely with the Principal Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor (if appointed), and provide specialist expertise in a sub-discipline of engineering as an external advisor to assist with the supervision of the candidate.

5.3 Supervisor Responsibilities

All supervisors need to ensure that they:

- Uphold EIT's policies, procedures and codes of conduct that relate to research supervision and maintain professionalism at all times
- Work closely together with other supervisors to ensure that candidates receive accurate and consistent messages and advice on their research project
- Are responsive to candidates' queries and provide timely guidance to allow candidates to progress with their research project

- Maintain appropriate reporting requirements
- Review thesis drafts in a timely manner and provide constructive feedback
- Undertake alternate supervision arrangements, where a change of research focus or other matters necessitate a change in supervision arrangements, in accordance with EIT's policies and procedures
- Encourage and provide advice on attendance at relevant seminars, networking events and partnerships
- Participate in all formal aspects of higher degree research assessment, including internal candidature review panels
- Provide any other advice and assistance pertaining to the candidate's research project
- Resolve difficulties in accordance with relevant policies and procedures

5.3.1 Principal Supervisor

The Principal Supervisor must ensure that they:

- Consult with the Deputy Dean to ensure that all resources and necessary materials will be available to the candidate as required
- Hold initial meetings with the candidate and all supervisors to discuss planning and timelines at a mutually convenient time, including developing a meeting schedule
- Discuss scope and requirement of the research project, including research methodologies and other matters relevant to the research project
- Develop an Agreement between the Student and Supervisors (Student-Supervisor Agreement) within the first 6 weeks of enrolment
- Provide research induction training within three months of commencement of study (for Doctorate candidates only)
- Provide advice on publishing, where relevant, and reach agreement on authorship and acknowledgement of contributions by others
- Ensure that research is conducted in a safe manner
- Distribute relevant policies and information to supervisors and candidates so that everyone is aware of their responsibilities and EIT's research framework
- Provide advice, mentoring and support relating to the candidate's research, and encourage persistent, yet innovative and creative approaches to the research project
- Encourage candidates to participate in research training opportunities
- Advise candidates of ethical clearance and approval requirements
- Are vigilant, proactive and supportive, ensuring candidates undertake research ethically, using high quality research practices.
- Provide advice at the outset about research misconduct and associated penalties, and remain alert to any research misconduct
- Advise candidates and supervisors on relevant policies and procedures relating to assessment of the candidate's research thesis and confirmation of candidature
- Identify appropriately qualified thesis examiners for both confirmation of candidature and the thesis

- Provide clear written documentation and reports where the standard of the candidate's work is unsatisfactory, and ensure that strategies are identified with the candidate to resolve the matter
- Advise the candidate if and when the thesis is suitable for submission in accordance with policies and procedures
- Provide any other advice and assistance pertaining to the candidate's research project
- Address any issues or challenges as they arise, and advise the Deputy Dean accordingly

5.4 Candidate Responsibilities

Higher degree research candidates must ensure they undertake all required tasks as advised by their research supervisors and maintain satisfactory academic progress. They have a responsibility to:

- Read, understand and comply with relevant policies, information and EIT's research framework
- Complete the Agreement between the Student and Supervisors (Student-Supervisory Agreement)
- Undertake research induction training within three months of commencement of study
- Maintain regular contact with supervisors, seek assistance and advise of any difficulties as they arise
- Abide by the research code of conduct at all times
- Obtain relevant ethics approval, and safety clearance where applicable
- Allocate sufficient time to the research project, demonstrate satisfactory progress, and submit written material according to the agreed timelines
- Manage data in accordance with EIT's policies and procedures
- Provide input to the development of timelines and milestones with the Principal Supervisor, adhere to the timelines and attend meetings as per the agreed schedule
- Respond to feedback from supervisors in a timely manner
- Obtain permission before undertaking any form of leave (Doctorate candidates only)
- Complete confirmation of candidature within, 6 months (doctoral) of commencement in full-time mode, and relevant pro-rata period for part-time candidates
- Undertake coursework as required by the supervisors (Doctorate candidates only)
- Submit the thesis for examination according to the agreed timeline, and attend to any potential amendments as required, within a period of six weeks
- Submit the final thesis in the required form as outlined by EIT

5.5 Research Committee Responsibilities

The Research Committee is appointed by the Academic Board and will undertake its functions according to the Terms of Reference for the Research Committee. The Research Committee will be responsible for:

- Appointment of research supervisors
- Acting as EIT's adviser on integrity in research
- Being knowledgeable of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, this policy and all relevant EIT policies and procedures
- Approval of examiners for candidates' research theses

- Candidature decisions, including commencement, continuance, changes to candidature or research topic, confirmation and termination in accordance with relevant policies and procedures (Doctorate candidates only)

The Deputy Dean will maintain a Register of Supervisors and ensure that all supervisors approved by the Research Committee are entered on to the Register.

6.0 Master's Thesis Assessment

It is vital that overall the stated learning outcomes as well as the contributions the thesis unit is claimed to be making to the delivery of the program graduate attributes are clearly and independently demonstrated by the student.

6.1 Selection of Thesis Topic

1-2 weeks prior to beginning the Thesis unit, a topic/s should generally be proposed by the student but past topics may be made available for reference.

The chosen topic needs to be accepted and approved by the Thesis Supervisor (allocated after draft submission of topic/s) and/or Course Coordinator

The Thesis Supervisor should carefully and realistically assess the individual situation of each student, to ensure they are not disadvantaged in their research by workplace restrictions or time constraints.

The thesis topic should be based upon the duration of hours for the thesis work as stated in the Unit Outline.

Typical Thesis topics for a Master degree should be based around Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) requirements for the Master degree by course work: (<https://www.aqf.edu.au/sites/aqf/files/aqf-addendum-2014.pdf>).

6.2 Attributes of a Master's Degree Thesis

A master's degree thesis should have the following attributes:

Knowledge:

Graduates of a master's degree (coursework) will have:

- a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a discipline and/or area of professional practice
- knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work and/or learning

Skills:

Graduates of a master's degree (coursework) will have:

- cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to reflect critically on theory and professional practice or scholarship
- cognitive, technical and creative skills to investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice
- cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level

- communication and technical research skills to justify and interpret theoretical propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice or scholarship

Application of knowledge and skills:

Graduates of a master's degree (coursework) will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:

- with creativity and initiative to new situations in professional practice and/or for further learning
- with high level personal autonomy and accountability
- to plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship

For example, a Master level thesis topic for Industrial Automation could be:

An innovative design of the control strategy for an entire mineral processing plant comprising 20 PID loops where there is a degree of interaction between individual loops and a necessity for advanced control because of dead time constraints requiring research into how the process interacts and state of the art technology available. In addition, remote access is required.

An unacceptable example of a Master level thesis would be:

Implementation of 20 standard PID loops with existing equipment where there is no innovative advanced control required and equipment is available entirely off-the-shelf and the processes are well understood and extensively applied on past design projects.

6.3 Supervision of Thesis

The Thesis Supervisor will be formally appointed once the student has submitted their draft topics for approval but before the second week of the Thesis unit. The Thesis Supervisor could be a member of EIT staff but an external Thesis Supervisor is preferred, as long as the teaching standards are upheld (as per the EIT 'Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Induction Procedure') in this regard.

It is expected that the Thesis Supervisor will have regular communications with the student. The Thesis Supervisor is expected to guide the student with clear, mutually agreed deadlines for each contact session, and is anticipated to spend a sufficient amount of time per session, interacting and assisting the student (and answering student queries and comments).

The Thesis Supervisor should remark on the documentation accompanying the thesis for examination including any restricting circumstances the student may have experienced (such as work restrictions/career disruptions).

The Thesis Supervisor may need to interact with the student's company in order to assist the student in expediting the work that is being undertaken.

Under no circumstances is the Thesis Supervisor to assist the student in the actual writing of the thesis; apart from making reasonable suggested corrections to the thesis document. It is not the job of the supervisor to act as a proof reader of the thesis – a minimum level of communication and reading/writing skills are expected of the student.

6.4 Student Progress during the Thesis Unit

Students must attend every scheduled progress meeting during the Thesis Unit.

If a student cannot attend a scheduled meeting they must give their Thesis Supervisor no less than 48 hours' notice. The Thesis Supervisor will make every effort to reschedule the meeting at this point.

If a student cannot attend a scheduled meeting, they should still submit their 'Thesis Progress Report' to their Thesis Supervisor.

If a student misses meetings, or is non-responsive, the Thesis supervisor will alert the Learning Support Officer urgently, and actions to monitor progress will be taken.

6.5 Appointment of Thesis Examiners

Two Thesis Examiners should be nominated, approved and appointed at least two weeks before the thesis is due for submission for examination by the Thesis students. It is important that the examination process is not compromised by a bias on the part of an examiner, or a conflict of interest.

An examiner can be sourced from within EIT staff and may be the student's supervisor; but at least one examiner will be external. An external Thesis Examiner must:

- not be a member of EIT staff. Former members of EIT staff may be appointed provided that they continue to be actively engaged in industry and all prior contact with the student or the thesis is disclosed to determine the appropriateness of the appointment
- not have or have had a close personal or contractual relationship with the student to be examined or any member of the staff of that student's Department if this may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest
- not have been associated with the supervisor or student in the course
- not be approved where there is an actual or perceived serious conflict of interest with the student, a supervisor, EIT, subject matter or with another examiner

An examiner need not hold an academic appointment. However, all examiners should hold a related level of qualification for which the candidate is being examined or alternatively should have the equivalent experience as per the EIT '*Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Induction Procedure*'.

6.6 Examination of Thesis Submissions

The Thesis Examiner is to return the completed Thesis Examination Form to the Learning Support Officer within four weeks of receiving the Thesis.

Examiners will be provided with a marking rubric detailing specific criteria.

Where the examiner recommends a '*Minor amendments*', a clear written statement should be provided detailing the errors and omissions to correct. Students who are required to make minor amendments will be allowed up to an additional two weeks to complete the recommended changes before printing. A clear statement detailing the changes made needs to be submitted by the student.

Where the examiner recommends '*Major amendments*', a clear written statement should be provided detailing the changes needed. Students who are required to make major amendments will be allowed up to an additional six weeks to complete the recommended changes before printing. A clear statement detailing the changes made and how the changes meet the amendment recommendations need to be submitted by the student.

A verbal examination is conducted if any examiner recommends. The verbal examination committee will include the course coordinator, both/all the examiners, the learning support officer and if needed, any

other EIT academics. A seminar will not be required from the student, but the student will need to give a briefing of their research work as a refresh for the committee. The committee will ask the student questions in the examination session to further assess the level of the research work. A decision of pass (major/minor amendments and resubmission, as per the above stated process) or not pass (fail the thesis unit) will be made based on the verbal examination by the committee.

In the case of unsatisfactory amendments, the student would fail the unit. Amendments or verbal examination will not affect the original marks.

A student must achieve 50% or above in their final thesis and in the unit. Fees may apply for any re-examination. If a student fails, they will have to re-enrol for the next course intake.

If there is more than 15% mark discrepancy in examination results; or a re-examination is required; a third examiner will undertake a further assessment. In all scenarios, the average of the both/all examiners' marks will be assigned as the final grade.

If a student is unable to complete their Thesis and submit it for examination, or re-examination, within the timeframes of the Thesis Unit, or they have been awarded a 'Fail' result after examination, they will be required to re-enrol in the next scheduled Thesis Unit and pay the full Unit fee again. Full student participation will be expected during the re-sit of the Thesis Unit (not just re-examination). Students may work on the same Thesis as their original submission if they are required to re-sit the Thesis Unit.

6.7 Publication of Theses

All theses are made available to the public through the EIT website and forwarded to other repositories for digital archiving. A copy of the thesis is also archived by the Learning Support Officer on successful examination of the thesis.

If a student does not want their thesis to be made public (e.g. because they are writing a book or preparing a patent) an embargo can be placed on the thesis for a defined period of time. The student is required to advise their Learning Support Officer in writing (by email) that this is required and receive confirmation back that this has been actioned. Once the embargo has expired the thesis will be placed on the EIT website for public access.

7.0 Doctorate Candidate Academic Progress

A doctorate student is admitted to the program as a provisional candidate until successful completion of the Confirmation of Candidature process.

7.1 Confirmation of Candidature (CoC)

Students must complete and submit the Confirmation of Candidature Form to the Research Committee, with assistance from their Principal Supervisor. The Principal Supervisor will submit two external experts with appropriate expertise, for the committee to select one expert for the Candidature Panel, ensuring that they are not involved in supervision of the research project. A time for the candidature presentation (15 to 20 minutes) will be determined in conjunction with the Chair, Research Committee.

The Candidature Panel will consist of:

- The Dean and/or Deputy Dean of EIT
- 1 x external expert
- 1 x EIT academic with expertise in research

The Candidature Panel will provide constructive feedback to the candidate and Principal Supervisor and make a recommendation to the Research Committee to either approve the research project; request amendments to the project or not approve the project. The Candidature Panel will provide reasons for their recommendation.

The Research Committee will make a decision on the research project and advise the candidate in writing within 5 business days. The Research Committee will provide reasons for any decision to amend or reject the project, and record the decision on the Confirmation of Candidature Form.

7.2 Candidate Progress

Candidate Progress Reports are to be completed every 6 months by the research candidate and Principal Supervisor, and the outcome reported to the Research Committee. Unsatisfactory progress will be recorded on the Progress Report, and a written warning will be provided to the candidate.

The candidate should work with their supervisors to meet the specific conditions detailed in the warning letter within the specified time of three months. If the specific conditions are met by the end of the three-month period, the candidate's candidature will be allowed to continue.

If a candidate fails to meet the specific conditions within the specified time period, the candidate will be asked in writing to show cause why their enrolment should not be terminated and they will be invited to attend a meeting. The candidate may bring a support person who is not a legal representative, or a Student Advocate to the meeting to provide emotional support only.

An international on-campus candidate at risk of unsatisfactory progress will be reviewed to determine if they will be able to complete the course within the expected duration stated on the Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE). Interventions and support will be offered to the candidate. If an international on-campus candidate has made reasonable progress to meet the specific conditions but will not complete the course within the expected duration as specified on their CoE, EIT may extend the duration of their study.

If an international on-campus candidate has been deemed as making unsatisfactory progress, the candidate will be advised that it may lead to the candidate being reported to the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA), and that the candidate's visa may subsequently be affected, depending on the outcome of any appeal process.

7.2.1 Unsatisfactory Progress

Unsatisfactory progress is defined as:

- Failure to provide a research proposal and complete confirmation of candidature within the required time-frame
- Failure to meet the requirements of confirmation of candidature as a result of the research project proposal being deemed not to be acceptable on academic grounds
- Failure to obtain ethics approval for the conduct of the research project
- Failure to meet agreed milestones of the research project where no mitigating circumstances or special consideration has been approved
- Failure to meet the requirements of the mid-candidature review
- Failure to attend three or more consecutive Student-Supervisor meetings with the Principal Supervisor or failure to attend Student-Supervisor meetings on a regular basis without a valid reason that has been substantiated in accordance with EIT's policies and procedures
- Failure to comply with EIT's policies and procedures
- Failure to submit the thesis for examination within the prescribed time
- Being absent without approved leave for more than three months, or in the case of an international candidate, is absent without approved leave for any period of time outside of leave permitted under the National Code

Failure to achieve satisfactory progress may result in termination of the candidate's enrolment. Where a candidate's enrolment is terminated, they have the right to appeal under the Student Grievance Policy and related procedures.

8.0 Research Misconduct

Research misconduct and the processes for dealing with alleged misconduct is outlined in the Research Misconduct Policy. Other forms of misconduct are outlined in the Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy.

9.0 Complaints and Appeals

Students should attempt to resolve issues or conflicts with their supervisor. The Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Policy and related procedure provide further details to assist with resolving candidate's complaints and appeals.

Matters relating to research misconduct are handled under the Research Misconduct Policy.

Disputes between supervisors are handled under the Staff Grievance Policy and related procedures.

10.0 Definitions

Admission: the process for admitting an applicant into a course at EIT, following a successful application and acceptance of the offer of a place by the applicant in the course. Admission is part of the enrolment process.

Candidate: a person enrolled in a Higher Degree Research degree at EIT

Candidature: the period from enrolment in a Higher Degree Research degree at EIT to submission of the thesis, excluding any approved leave of absence.

Course: A single course leading to an Australian higher education award.

Deferment: an agreement to allow an applicant to defer taking up the place they have been offered in an EIT course until a later time.

Domestic Student: An Australian Citizen, Australian Permanent Resident or a New Zealand Citizen with a Special Category Visa who meets residency criteria. This includes students who are paying tuition fees directly without using the FEE-HELP loan scheme ('domestic non FEE-HELP candidates') and students who are using the FEE-HELP loan for all or part of a unit(s) tuition fee ('domestic FEE-HELP candidates').

Research - Professional Doctorate: makes an original, significant and extensive contribution to knowledge and understanding in the relevant field of study in the context of professional practice

Research - Masters by Coursework Research: presents the results of original research in a scholarship form demonstrating the candidate's knowledge of the research topic and this discipline/s it embraces

International Student: A student who is not a domestic student. This includes students on student visas or temporary residence visas ('international on-campus') and those studying off-shore via online learning ('international online').

Research Supervisor: A supervisor is the individual who helps students achieve their academic potential and who generally chairs the student's supervisory committee. They should help their students at every stage from conceptualisation of the research project, presentation and refinement of topic to examination and publication of research. (*Reference to University of British Columbia*)

Unit: A discrete unit of study, where a combination of units makes up a course of study.

Withdrawal: A formal procedure where a student decides to discontinue a course without the intention of returning or discontinues a unit with the intention of enrolling in it at a later date.

11.0 Related Policies

- Research Code of Conduct (HE)
- Research Misconduct Policy (HE)
- Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy (DS)
- Assessment Moderation and Student Progress Policy (HE)
- Assessment Moderation and Student Progress Procedure (HE)
- Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Policy (HE)
- Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Procedure (HE)

12.0 Forms and other documents

- Student-Supervisor Agreement
- Confirmation of Candidature Form
- Student Progress Report
- Thesis Procedure