

**Graduate School of the Environment
Division of Environmental & Life Sciences
Macquarie University**

Guide for Higher Degree Research students

WELCOME TO THE GSE!.

This document has been designed to help you become familiar with departmental policies relating to higher degree research candidates – what we expect of you, what you can expect of us, and the range of resources you can access.

PART A CANDIDATURE

1a Student Responsibilities

When you enrol as a research student, you automatically accept responsibility and obligations. Your primary responsibility is to yourself to complete the research at an appropriate standard, and complete your degree in a timely fashion. This is not the responsibility of either the Graduate School or your Supervisor.

1b. Supervisor Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to: ensure that a candidate maintains satisfactory progress within the specified terms of his/her candidature; that appropriate advice on the content and form of the thesis is offered; and that work towards the thesis is subject to regular and constructive critical review.

Macquarie University has a code of supervisory practice to which all departments must adhere. The details of this code are outlined in the following document. When you first enrol, you and your supervisor should obtain them from pp.22-25 of the HDR Guide 2007 http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/current_students/documents/HDR_GUIDE_2007.pdf#guide

and discuss them. Pay particular attention to the guidelines pertaining to 'agreement between candidate and supervisor', 'regular meetings between candidate and supervisor to discuss progress' and 'procedures for dealing with problems of supervision or progress'. Supervisor and student responsibilities and relations will also be discussed at progress interviews.

2. Progress Monitoring

It is important to the department and to yourselves that you complete your studies within the timeframe set by the Federal Government – four years for a full-time PhD, eight years for part-time. In order to ensure this, the Graduate School requires you to report regularly, we assess your progress and provide feedback to you.

In your first year

The first year of being a postgraduate can be difficult – you are making the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate and trying to develop a research topic. It is thus compulsory that students attend the university induction program (held in February) or, if unable to attend, complete the web-based version. You must also attend a departmental induction

program that introduces you to the department and outlines expectations of you and your supervisor. This is held twice a year, in February and again in August. It will include an outline of the compulsory coursework requirements for all new research students (GSE898 Research Management and GSE899 Research Communication). Your supervisor may also recommend that you undertake other coursework in philosophical, technical and analytical areas that will be of benefit to your research e.g. statistics, genetics, GIS, Social Impact Assessment etc.

At the end of your first six months (pro-rata for part-time) you are required to present a research proposal to the department along with a budget and timeline. At the associated progress interview, we will review supervisory arrangements, your progress so far, and the goals for the next reporting period. Assuming progress is satisfactory you will continue your research as described and agreed in your progress interview. If progress has been unsatisfactory, further goals and timelines will be established and a further review date set. If progress is still unsatisfactory at that time, you will be asked to show cause why your candidature should not be terminated under PhD, MSc and MA Rule 6 of the MU regulations governing postgraduate research.

In October/November of your first year you will also have to participate in the University review of your progress, as outlined below.

In your second and subsequent years, you will have to:

- submit a signed **Progress Report to the Graduate School for each semester that you are enrolled**, usually at the end of May/early June and in November (available from the GSE web site: Intranet/GSE Policies)
- attend a Progress Interview for each semester that you are enrolled
- submit an **Annual Report to the University** (via your supervisor and the Graduate School) for each year that you are enrolled. The report form will be sent to you from the HDRO in October.

In the GSE you must submit the appropriate Progress Reports to satisfactorily complete the requirements of the research unit you are enrolled in. You must also attend the Progress Interview. If you do not do so, then the Graduate School is unable to state that you are making adequate progress, and you will automatically be asked to show cause why your candidature should not be terminated (PhD, MSc and MA rule 6, Master by coursework rule 8).

Towards the end of your candidature, you may be tempted to ignore these requirements. Please do not do this. Until you have formally submitted your thesis, and have a written receipt from the HDRO, you are required to submit your Progress Reports and attend the Progress Interview. Submitting an (advanced) draft to your Supervisor for comment is not the same as formally submitting your thesis. Moreover, it is **your** responsibility to see that you complete your research, not your Supervisor's.

The six-monthly Progress Reports required by the Graduate School are designed to monitor your progress and to detect and correct any problems at an early stage. They are also designed to encourage you to think of your research in a planned and deliberate manner.

Your supervisor will be requested to endorse the report, by comment and signature. You should discuss the Report with your supervisor before submitting it to the Higher Degree Research Coordinator.

Progress interviews

Towards the end of each semester, you will be interviewed by a panel of academics and associates from the GSE. Your supervisor will normally be present for most of the interview, but is absent during one phase. Interviews take no more than 15 minutes and are held in the GSE. The panel will normally be chaired by the Higher Degree Research Coordinator. The purpose of the interview is to explore your current progress and your plans for the next reporting period. It is not an inquisition, and we do not seek to “blame” you for any lack of progress. Instead, we seek to determine the causes, and to offer assistance and advice on how to overcome any problems. One of the most common suggestions is how to develop a timetable for submitting material to your Supervisor when you are close to submitting your thesis.

During the interview you will be asked to comment on the quantity and quality of supervision. Your supervisor will be absent during this phase of the interview. This is part of our ongoing commitment to achieving excellence in supervision.

At the interview you will be asked the following questions (plus any others that arise from your Progress Report, or the interview)

- Are you happy with the present position of your research within your overall program?
- Are your targets for next reporting period realistic?
- Do you have a clear (even if slightly hazy) vision of the overall structure of your research, and of your thesis?
- How can the GSE help you to complete your research?
- Please comment on the quantity and quality of your supervision. (Your supervisor will be absent when you are asked this question.)

During the interview, the Higher Degree Research Coordinator makes notes to record your responses to the questions. These notes will be read to you to make sure that they are an accurate record of the interview.

Outcomes of Progress Reports and Interviews

After each set of interviews, the HDR Coordinator reviews your Progress Report and the notes made at the Interview. Based on these, you will receive a letter summarising the views of the GSE on your progress, plus a copy of the the annotated and signed front page of your Progress Report. Examples of typical letters are given below.

a) A satisfactory report

Based on your Progress Report and information presented by you at the recent Progress Interview, we are satisfied that your progress in First / Second semester

has been acceptable. If you are able to meet the targets that you have set in the Progress Report, then you should be able to complete your research within the maximum time allowed.

b) An unsatisfactory report

Based on your Progress Report and information presented by you at the recent Progress Interview, we are not satisfied that your progress in First / Second semester has been acceptable. You have been pursuing this research now for several years and yet you are still unable to bring it any closer to completion.

Consequently, unless you submit your dissertation / thesis by the end of the Second / First Semester, the GSE will require you to show cause why your candidature should not be terminated.(Rule 6).

c) An unsatisfactory report

Based on your Progress Report and information presented by you at the recent Progress Interview, we are not satisfied that your progress in First / Second semester has been acceptable. Over the past several years of your candidature you have made minimal or zero progress on your research, and have changed direction almost completely.

Consequently, unless you are able to clearly demonstrate substantial progress on your present research by the end of the Second / First semester, the GSE will require you to show cause why your candidature should not be terminated. (Rule 6).

The first is self-explanatory. The second and third are examples of negative letters specifying the reasons, and the action that will be taken. Individual letters will have more detail on the lack of progress. If you receive a letter like this, you must consult your Supervisor immediately for advice.

Supervisors will be given a summary report on the students they supervise. This will take the form of a list of students with “satisfactory” outcomes, and details of any “unsatisfactory” outcomes. Supervisors will also be advised of students’ comments on their supervision. In cases where students consider their supervision to be unsatisfactory, the GSE will seek the opinion of the supervisor, and then counsel the supervisor if necessary.

PART B RESOURCES

1. Contacts and Sources of Information

Supervisors are the first and most immediate source of any information you require. However, there are a variety of other contacts and sources you can utilise within the department and the university.

- Trish Fanning is the Coordinator of Higher Degree Research in the GSE, office E8B314, ext. 7979; email: pfanning@gse.mq.edu.au She convenes the unit GSE899 Research Communication, in which you will be required to present a seminar on your research once a year. Trish also looks after progress monitoring so will organize progress interviews each semester. She can help with questions you have about departmental policies, scholarships, progress reports etc.
- Peter Nelson, Head of Department, office E8B304, ext. 6958; email: pnelson@gse.mq.edu.au He will help you with any problems where you may need assistance at a higher (Divisional or University) level. He oversees the unit GSE 898 Research Management which you are required to complete within your first year of candidature (currently convened and taught by Mr Richard Cardew, a retired former Head and now an Honorary Associate of the GSE).
- Jane Yang, Divisional Postgraduate Coordinator, ELS, in the ELS Centre, ground floor of building E7A; scholarships, enrolment status, rules for candidature etc. x4479; jyang@els.mq.edu.au
- Gunnella Murphy, Executive Officer in the GSE office E8A 370, (ext.7988; email gmurphy@gse.mq.edu.au) can assist with queries about your candidature and enrolment, and can answer general questions about travel, research support, offices, keys, computers, stationery, pay forms etc.
- The Higher Degree Research Office (HDRO), located in Cottage C4C (tel. 7987, email: hdrenq@mq.edu.au) can help you with queries about your enrolment status, progression, applications for extension, scholarship matters etc. Visit the website at <http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/HDRO> for information on policies, procedures, scholarships, thesis examination etc.
- The GSE web site <http://www.gse.mq.edu.au> contains information on the department, what we teach, our research interests, bookings for rooms and equipment and a list of GSE Policies (in Intranet section). There are various forms there to download.
- The University Library – you will have received induction about the library’s facilities during the University Induction session. Your supervisor will be able to help you with specific needs.
- The Higher Degree Research Office web page contains information on university wide facilities available to you <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/home>

2. Facilities

Space: you will be allocated an office that will typically be shared with other research students. The GSE provides you with a computer which has email and web access and is networked to 2 GSE laser printers, one in E8A 370 and the other in E8B 305.

If you need to work in a laboratory you will be shown the space available to you by your supervisor. The GSE has 2 labs: one wet, one dry, plus access to other lab space within the Division.

Equipment: The GSE owns 2 boats: one 5.7 metres and the other 3.8 metres, a 4 WD vehicle, and a range of equipment including photographic, acoustic and underwater video capabilities, GIS software including ESRI site licence, radio tracking equipment, water

quality testing, GPS, total station survey equipment etc. We also have access to CSIRO isotope laboratories (Geochemistry) and CSIRO air quality laboratories. Ask your supervisor for details. All use of equipment must be applied for and signed out when you take it in the field. Please refer to the booking system on the website at www.gse.mq.edu.au/intranet You must fill in a booking sheet, kept in the GSE office. It has to be signed by your supervisor.

Photocopying: your library card doubles as a rechargeable photocopy card, for use on library photocopiers. There is a departmental photocopier in E8B 305 and you will choose your pin number and be allocated a yearly allowance – ask Gunnella about this.

Email/computers: email accounts can be established by Rees Griffiths (ext. 8202; email rgriffiths@els.mq.edu.au). Rees is the Divisional IT Manager and acts together with Michael Bastion and Paul Rohozky as troubleshooters for departmental computers. All problems should be logged on the Divisional website at <http://www.els.mq.edu.au/IT-Helpdesk/default-text.html> in order to receive assistance.

3. Funding Possibilities

Scholarships/Employment

Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA), EIPRS (Endeavour International Postgraduate Research awards), and MQRES are the most common source of funding for research postgraduates, though there are other scholarships available (see the JASON website <http://www.jason.edu.au/>). Please talk to your supervisor or HDRO for advice on maximising your chances of being awarded a scholarship if you do not already have one.

Research students are sometimes employed as tutors or research assistants for various members of staff. The demand for tutors and research assistants depends on the availability of funding. It is best to let your supervisor know if you are interested in this kind of work.

GSE Research and Conference Funding

Higher degree research students are entitled to financial support to assist with their research. You may also request funds to assist you to present your research at recognised conferences (see GSE Policy on Conference Support on the GSE web page). Students will be allocated a maximum of \$4000 (\$2000 for part-time students) per annum from the University to support their research, subject to approval of a project outline, budget and timelines. For PhD students, this support is available for 3 years (6 years for part-time); requests for a fourth year of funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and must be fully justified with reference to the amended project outline and budget. This applies for Masters students also with corresponding limits of 1.5 years full-time and 3 years part-time.

A range of activities could be supported with this funding. *The principal guideline is that the money should be used to facilitate the student's research and timely completion of the degree.* Likely expenses include (though note this is not an exhaustive list):

- Fieldwork expenses – e.g. travel, accommodation, purchase of data
- Fieldwork equipment – e.g. recording equipment/data loggers, transcribers

- Necessary capital equipment – e.g. scanners and technical software

Each year, you should discuss your needs for support funding with your supervisor as part of your research planning. Applications for funding may be **submitted twice a year at the time of progress reporting**, using the downloadable form available from http://www.gse.mq.edu.au/intranet/policy/RES_FT1P.html in which you are required to submit a budget with your application and make full justification for all funding requested. You will also need to report each year on how the funding was spent and what outcomes were achieved; this is mandatory if you apply for further funding.

Macquarie University funding

Students are also expected to utilise the *Macquarie University Postgraduate Research Fund*. Funds are allocated according to merit and are based on an application. You can only receive one grant of \$4000 during your candidature so plan well. There are two funding rounds per year. Again discuss with your supervisor. Details are on the website of the Research Office at <http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/fund/internal/pgrf>.

Other sources of funding

Your supervisor will be able to advise you about other organisations, some philanthropic from which you may be able to obtain funding. Typical examples in the past have been Australian Geographic, Seaworld, PADI, Royal Botanical Gardens, Environmental Trust, etc. Also check on the Research Office website.

PART C SAFETY AND ETHICS

1. Safety

You are obliged to satisfy the department that you are aware of the potential risks your research might pose to yourself, and that you can take reasonable steps to avoid those risks. All research students who work in laboratories and/or go out in the field will be required to undertake safety training with the Divisional Safety Officer, Ron Claassens, ext. 8246. Local Occupational Health & Safety issues can be taken up with the GSE Executive Officer. The University has policies which we have to comply with and Gunnella is able to advise on these. Please refer to the website at <http://www.pers.mq.edu.au/OHS/index.html>. As you will see, there are procedures for incident reporting and on your tour of the department, Gunnella will point out locations of First Aid kits etc. There are several staff trained in First Aid, namely Trish Fanning and Rob Harcourt, as well as some research students.

As part of your research planning, you also need to complete a fieldwork risk assessment before beginning fieldwork: see the ELS website for details and to download the forms. There is also a link from the GSE web site.

2. Human and Animal Ethics

At Macquarie University researchers undertaking projects involving human subjects (formal or informal interviews, questionnaires, etc.) must show that it is ethically appropriate. To do this you must apply to the University Ethics Committee for clearance. Application forms and guidelines are available at: <http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/ethics/human/>

After consultation with your supervisor, fill in the application form, append the necessary attachments and hand the form to Ken Cussen, the department's representative on the committee. Ken will make initial comments and advice on your application. The committee meets regularly throughout the year and has a fast-track system of ethics approval review in place. See the web site for details <http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/ethics> All research involving the use of animals must demonstrate that it complies with the NHMRC guidelines for research with animals. Your supervisor will advise you on this and application has to be made to the University Committee. Rob Harcourt is the Chair of the University Animal Ethics Committee and can assist you with your application. Forms and guidelines are available at <http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/ethics>

ANY QUESTIONS?

As a department it is our goal to create an inclusive and stimulating postgraduate experience. If you have any queries or concerns please contact Trish Fanning or Gunnella Murphy.