

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
University Research and Research Training Management Committee

POLICY ON PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE DEGREES

1.0 PREAMBLE

This policy sets out the general conditions for the award of Professional Doctorates by Australian Catholic University. It should be read in conjunction with the *Research and Professional Doctorate Degree Regulations (RPDDR)*.

2.0 DEFINITION

A Professional Doctorate is a program of research and advanced study, which enables the candidate to make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in their professional context. In so doing, the candidate may also contribute more generally to scholarship within a discipline or field of study. The professional doctorate, which is specific to a discipline, is aimed primarily at practitioners in the field.

3.0 CONSISTENCY WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSION

Any Professional Doctorate should be consistent with the Mission of Australian Catholic University.

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of a Professional Doctorate are to:

- provide postgraduate opportunities in professional fields for students whose background and experience are appropriate to pursue leadership in the professions;
- provide extended and advanced training in professional fields where projects and investigations are applied and oriented to professional practice; and
- further relationships between the University and the professions.

5.0 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

For admission as a candidate in a Professional Doctorate an applicant will:

- hold a Master's degree from a recognised institution; or
- hold a Bachelor's degree with first class or second class honours (Division A) from a recognised institution; or
- have been enrolled in a research Master's degree at Australian Catholic University for not less than one year full-time or two years part-time and be able to demonstrate that their work is of the standard required for candidature in a Professional Doctorate;
- have demonstrated capacity to undertake significant research in the proposed doctoral field; and
- relevant professional experience, as appropriate for a given discipline.

6.0 DURATION OF CANDIDATURE

The duration of candidature for a Professional Doctorate will normally be three years full-time equivalent study.

7.0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF CANDIDATURE

Matters relating to academic progress of Professional Doctorate candidates are set out in section 15 of the RPDDR.

8.0 NATURE OF PROGRAM

Professional Doctorates will comprise a combination of research and scholarship with doctoral coursework and professional practice and enquiry, as appropriate. At a minimum the research and scholarship component should be equivalent to one year's full-time doctoral study but will normally be equivalent to two years' full-time doctoral study. A doctoral program may comprise:

- a supervised research and scholarship program of normally three years' full-time equivalent study;

- a coursework, research and scholarship program of at least three years' full-time equivalent study with normally two years' full-time equivalent research and scholarship; or
- a professional practice and enquiry, and coursework program, together with research and scholarship, totalling at least three years' full-time equivalent study.

Research undertaken as part of a Professional Doctorate is geared to directing and informing change and to making a difference in the workplace and/or professional context. The coursework component of the degree is designed to build on candidates' professional expertise by exposing them to leading and challenging ideas in their fields.

8.1 Research and scholarship component

The research and scholarship component of a Professional Doctorate may include the:

- development of new research methods and new data analysis;
- writing of documents where the document is a research or scholarly product;
- work involved in planning and undertaking the research, developing the thesis and the preparation of the products for examination;
- other activities fundamental to the research and scholarship.

8.2 Coursework component

The coursework component of a Professional Doctorate should include, but not be limited to:

- doctoral-level courses in research methods and data analysis procedures; and
- other courses at doctoral level, such as those providing advanced knowledge relating to professional practice, appropriate to the outcomes of the degree.

8.3 Generic skills component

Each candidate enrolled in a Professional Doctorate should be provided with the opportunity to undertake training to develop skills and knowledge to support the timely completion of the degree and to develop generic skills required for career development.

8.4 Attributes of successful Professional Doctorate graduates

The successful Professional Doctorate graduate should demonstrate in the substance and presentation of their research, together with any other coursework assessment, that they have, in relation to their field:

- a broad practical knowledge;
- a critical understanding of research ethics, and of the literature, theories, methodologies and/or debates of their discipline;
- good presentation and communication skills;
- sound work practices and collaborative skills; and
- good research skills and practices.

9.0 ADVANCED STANDING

Advanced standing will be negotiable for candidates who have completed appropriate doctoral coursework at another recognised institution for equivalent coursework in each Professional Doctorate.

10.0 SUPERVISION

After receiving the advice of the relevant Dean, the University Research and Research Training Management Committee (URRTMC) shall appoint a Principal Supervisor and one or more additional supervisors (to be known as Co-Supervisors) for each candidate at the same time as it approves admission to the thesis stage of the candidature. Before making a recommendation, the Dean shall consult with the Head of School, proposed supervisor(s), other staff, as may be appropriate, and, if necessary, the candidate (section 11 of the RPDDR refers).

11.0 RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Candidates should have an open, collegial and productive learning environment, including a coordinated program of activity to integrate them into learning environment. The progress of each candidate is to be monitored by a structured process including confirmation of candidature, 6-monthly progress reports and an exit report. Students are required to give presentations of their research and scholarship.

12.0 RESOURCES

Each candidate should have access to the appropriate resources and facilities to enable the successful and timely completion of the Professional Doctorate.

13.0 OBTAINING ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH

All Professional Doctorate candidates are required to inform themselves of State and Commonwealth legislative requirements and to ensure that all research complies with these requirements. All candidates are also required to familiarise themselves with the *University Code of Conduct of Research* and with other relevant University policies on research-related matters (section 12 of the RPDDR refers).

14.0 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

All Professional Doctorate candidates are required to familiarise themselves with the University's *Intellectual Property Policy* prior to commencing their program (section 13 of the RPDDR refers).

15.0 THESIS

It is expected that the project and thesis will be relevant to the professional area in which the candidate works. The degree of rigour and intellectual standing of the professional doctorate thesis is the same as that for a Doctor of Philosophy but not as extensive in scope. The thesis should be written concisely, free from typographical errors and in a format appropriate to the discipline, and largely the candidate's unaided work. Where the research and scholarship component

comprise two years' full-time study, the thesis will be at least 50,000 words in length (including footnotes but not bibliographies and appendices).

The thesis will demonstrate:

- a substantial and original contribution to knowledge of direct relevance to the profession;
- a critical appraisal of relevant literature and available research and an appreciation and understanding of the relationship of the investigation undertaken to the wider field of knowledge with particular reference to the profession in which the investigations are located;
- knowledge and understanding of the methodological techniques used in the investigation and any associated shortcomings;
- the contribution to knowledge made by these investigations; and
- a satisfactory level of literary presentation reflecting the capacity to communicate in a clear, concise and authoritative manner appropriate to the discipline and the professional area.

16.0 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES, RIGHT OF REVIEW AND APPEAL

Candidates for a Professional Doctorate may request the URRTMC to review a decision on any matter relating to the conditions of candidature, including the adequacy of supervisory arrangements and contact (section 18 of the RPDDR refers). The right of review and appeal against the result of a taught unit shall be in accordance with the Academic Regulations.

17.0 BASIS FOR AWARD OF DEGREE

Any coursework that is required for the degree must be passed before the research thesis is submitted for examination.

With the exception of the Doctor of Psychology where two examiners are appointed, the research thesis must be examined by at least three examiners, two of whom are appropriately qualified external examiners.

To be eligible to be admitted to a Professional Doctorate award, a candidate must:

- (a) comply with all University statutes and rules;
- (b) pay all relevant fees and charges; and
- (c) complete all requirements prescribed for the course.

Professional Doctorates shall be awarded without classification unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board and Senate (section 19 of the RPDDR refers).

18.0 RELATED POLICIES

- Academic Honesty Policy
- Research and Professional Doctorate Degree Regulations
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Mission Statement
- Language and Literacy Policy
- Policy on Quality Teaching and Learning
- Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning
- Student Code of Conduct

Include appropriate links for above policies etc.

19.0 REFERENCES

Guidelines: Professional Doctorates, Council of Australian Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies, March 2005
