Australian Catholic University is committed to excellence in research quality, productivity and knowledge transfer for the welfare and benefit of the community. In pursuing this goal, the University has developed its research capacity in areas that are strongly aligned with its unique identity and Mission.

The University has a strategy of research concentration and selectivity in four broad focus areas: theology and philosophy; health; education; and the common good and social justice.

The University has six University Priority Research Centres recognised for their research productivity, and a number of other centres and institutes with emerging research strengths (see right page). In addition, the University has an extensive network of partner institutions, both nationally and internationally, to ensure that its research focus is contemporary and driven by the needs of the global community.

Consistent with the Catholic intellectual tradition and arising from its unique contributions to research and research training, the University actively promotes informed debate and community engagement. Achieving knowledge transfer, including interaction with its communities through its research endeavours, is fundamental to the University’s commitment to social justice and furthering the common good.

Research may be defined as creative work that is undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase our theoretical and/or practical knowledge and to apply existing knowledge in new ways. ACU offers a wide range of opportunities for students to undertake supervised research at either master’s or doctoral level.

The aim of a research degree is to provide a thorough training in a particular discipline through a process of original investigation in order to increase knowledge. It represents a wonderful opportunity to focus on an area of particular interest and to make an important contribution to the development of knowledge in society. It also enables students to work with one or more academics with specialist expertise in that area of study.
Types of research higher degrees

The University offers the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in a range of disciplines supervised by specialist staff in each faculty. Candidates for research higher degrees will only be accepted where suitable specialised supervision is available.

Within the discipline of your choice, the precise focus of your research will be agreed between you and your supervisor. You can commence your study in these degrees at any time throughout the year.

ACU also offers discipline-specific research higher degrees in education, psychology, practical ministry, exercise science, nursing and midwifery. Both master’s degrees and professional doctorates are offered in these areas. These degrees commence in February each year.

Duration

The time taken to complete a research higher degree depends on the type of degree and whether you study full-time or part-time.

Full-time

- The minimum completion time for PhD students is three years, after which a thesis is submitted for examination.
- The minimum completion time for MPhil students is two years, after which a thesis is submitted for examination.
- Other research higher degrees usually involve research training, which may include completion of some coursework units together with the research project and a thesis.

Part-time

Many students choose to study part-time in order to combine their study with work and/or family responsibilities.

Research Training Scheme

Commencing domestic students enrolling in a doctorate or master’s degree by research at ACU will be granted either a Research Training Scheme entitlement under the Commonwealth Government’s Research Training Scheme (RTS) or an ACU fee-waiver.

‘Domestic’ refers to Australian citizens and permanent residents, and New Zealand citizens. This means that candidates are provided with an exemption from course fees.

International students

ACU also welcomes eligible international students who wish to undertake research higher degrees.

Scholarships

Information about the availability of scholarships is available by email at: res.cand@acu.edu.au

Areas of research expertise

The availability of supervision reflects the research expertise of academic staff members in each faculty. Academic research supervisors may also be associated with the centres of the University listed below.

University Priority Research Centres

Centre for Early Christian Studies

Has expertise in the fields of biblical studies, church history, art history, Christian literature and Christian languages (Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Greek, Latin and Syriac) from the period of the New Testament to the eighth century.

Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership

Undertakes research, consultancies, leadership development programs and reviews of educational systems. Focus areas are: moral and ethical leadership, leadership for social justice and social responsibility, leadership capabilities, Indigenous leadership, intercultural leadership, leadership for learning and multi-level leadership.

Institute of Child Protection Studies

Enhances the wellbeing of children, young people and families through quality research, evaluation, training and community education. The Institute links research and practice through collaborative partnerships, with a commitment to prevention, early intervention and tertiary services, and a particular emphasis on participatory research methods.

Mathematics and Teaching and Learning Research Centre

Promotes quality research and a national perspective on mathematics teaching and learning. Using national and international links, the centre is committed to raising and addressing the social and ethical dimensions of mathematics education, and providing advice to government and professional organisations on policy development.

National Centre for Clinical Outcomes Research

Conducts rigorous, collaborative and multi-disciplinary programs of international and national nursing, midwifery and health services research across five priority areas: acute care, chronic care, innovative healthcare delivery, implementation research and vulnerable communities.

Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre

Conducts research related to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all Australians, especially for disadvantaged groups, including those with intellectual disability, ageing, community engagement, social and family policy, and youth spirituality.

Other centres

- Centre for Indigenous Education and Research
- Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-Religious Dialogue
- Centre for Learning and Teaching
- Centre of Physical Activity Across the Lifespan
- Golder Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality
- Plunkett Centre for Ethics

Institutes

- Institute for Advancing Community Engagement
- Institute for Catholic Identity and Mission
- Institute of Legal Studies
- Public Policy Institute

Centres

- Centre for Early Christian Studies
- Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership
- Institute of Child Protection Studies
- Mathematics and Teaching and Learning Research Centre
- National Centre for Clinical Outcomes Research
- Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre
- Other centres
- Institutes