



Name of Policy	Policy and Procedures for the Accreditation of Research Supervisors
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GRADUATE RESEARCH

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Policy and Procedures for the Accreditation of Research Supervisors

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Policy and Procedures for the Accreditation of Research Supervisors

1. Background

This policy¹ and related procedures have been developed to address the accreditation of supervisors of higher degree by research students at Australian Catholic University (ACU).

2. Policy Statement

To be eligible for appointment as a supervisor of higher degree by research candidates, members of staff must be accredited on the basis of qualifications and requirements set out below.

3. Policy Purpose

This policy sets out the requirements and process to achieve accreditation as a research higher degree supervisor at ACU. Once accredited, a supervisor is eligible to be appointed as a principal supervisor.

4. Application of Policy

Accreditation requirements apply to all supervisors of ACU higher degree by research students, including, where applicable, non-members of University staff and supervisors employed under contract.

5. Purpose of Accreditation

Accreditation is designed to provide quality assurance for research supervision at the University by:

- (a) ensuring effective supervisory practice within the University;
- (b) fostering staff with little supervisory experience; and
- (c) providing supervisory development for academic staff.

The accreditation process described below:

- (a) balances the need for minimum standards with meeting the professional development needs of new and existing supervisors;
- (b) is predicated on a staff member's self-assessment of current and future professional development needs in consultation with colleagues and his/her Head of School and Associate Dean (Research);
- (c) acknowledges the varying backgrounds and experience of research supervisors and values the prior experience and competence of successful supervisors;
- (d) is integrated with the principles and processes of the University's research education programs for research students and with the wider higher education policy context; and
- (e) is designed to improve the research education experience of higher degree by research candidates at ACU.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- (a) The University Research Committee (URC) and, by delegation, the Research Training Standing Committee (RTSC) are responsible for maintaining and reviewing this supervisor accreditation policy and procedures.
- (b) Within the guidelines below, accreditation is approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies on behalf of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- (c) Graduate Research administers the accreditation scheme and the associated Research Expertise Register (REXR).
- (d) Graduate Research is responsible for the offering of the program *Supervisor Training at ACU*.

¹ This policy is adapted in part from a University of Canberra policy.

- (e) Human Resources maintains records of the academic qualifications of staff and is responsible for the University-wide register of accredited supervisors on Staff Connect and for the inclusion of the program *Supervisor Training at ACU* on the list of professional development programs reported on Staff Connect.
- (f) Graduate Research is responsible for advising Human Resources of staff who have completed the supervisor training program *Supervisor Training at ACU* and of staff who have been approved as accredited research supervisors.
- (g) Graduate Research is responsible for the provision of lists of accredited supervisors to each Faculty and to the first meetings of the URC and the RTSC respectively each year.
- (h) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), in consultation with the URC and the RTSC, is expected to review the accreditation framework at least every five years to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of candidates, supervisors and the University in a changing higher education context.

7. Criteria for Accreditation

Criteria for accreditation of supervisors are based on qualifications, research activity, supervisory experience, formal training and/or ongoing professional development.

To be accredited as a supervisor on an ongoing basis, a staff member (or by approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies a non-staff member) should meet the following criteria:

- (a) evidence of appropriate qualification and research activity - PhD or a professional doctorate in education, psychology, nursing, business or any other recognised professional doctorate and evidence that they have had one ERA-eligible research output in the past three years; *and either*
- (b) completion of the *Supervisor Training at ACU* program or similar during the last three years (see section on Supervisor Training and Development), and experience as a co-supervisor; *or*

documented experience as a supervisor with successful completions at honours, Masters or doctoral level and a personal Supervisory Statement of supervisory approach and practice as described in section 9;
- (c) demonstrated ongoing professional development of relevance to research supervision.
- (d) other combinations of experience and qualifications as deemed appropriate by the Dean of Graduate Studies

The full accreditation requirements apply to all principal supervisors who are ACU staff. Modified requirements apply to adjunct and non-ACU staff experienced in research supervision in another organisation or environment who wish to supervise ACU research students. Such supervision would usually be as an associate supervisor (Appointment of a non-ACU employee as a principal supervisor is not normally recommended).

8. The Accreditation Process

New staff members who wish to supervise research candidates will work towards accreditation. Staff experienced in supervision, including experienced staff who are newly appointed to the University, may apply for accreditation immediately. Accredited supervisors are expected to fulfil certain conditions to maintain accreditation.

Staff members with previous supervisory experience may apply for accreditation using the Research Expertise Register database available on the University Research Website where information is provided as to the documentation of evidence required to meet the above criteria. Experienced supervisors may provide evidence of effectiveness in lieu of formal training. To maintain

accreditation, supervisors are expected to demonstrate effective practice (which may include student evaluation), research activity and ongoing professional development.

Staff members lacking in supervisory experience who wish to become accredited supervisors should complete the web based expression of interest form to attend the *Supervision at ACU Training* on the research supervisor accreditation page and ensure that they have approval from their Head of School. Once they have completed the *Supervisor Training and related requirements* they should then lodge a supervisor accreditation request through the Research Expertise Register. In the first instance they will be recorded as a Co-Supervisor (accreditation in progress). Upon the completion of the twelve month mentorship, they will be able to submit a full accreditation request through the Research Expertise Register for consideration by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

For staff members who express interest in working towards accreditation, there are three stages in the accreditation process.

8.1. Stage 1 - Preparing for Accreditation

This stage of the process is managed in the Faculty. Staff inexperienced in supervision who wish to become accredited supervisors will submit an expression of interest to attend the Supervisor Training and;

- (a) provide evidence to demonstrate that they have an appropriate doctoral qualification;
- (b) demonstrate that they have had one ERA-eligible research output in the past three years; and
- (c) be appointed as an honours supervisor or as a co-supervisor for a master's by research or doctoral student and be mentored by a registered supervisor assigned by the Faculty (normally for one year). This appointment as an honours supervisor or as an associate² or co-supervisor may precede or be concurrent with undertaking the Supervision Training at ACU or an equivalent program.

The Head of School in consultation with the URC will assist inexperienced staff members towards accreditation by arranging mentoring by a registered supervisor. Faculties will facilitate this process by maintaining an up to date list of the research interests and expertise of prospective supervisors (and other staff) within the Faculty. Maintenance of these records will be facilitated by the REXR database.

8.2. Stage 2 - Formal Training in Supervision

Staff will complete the *Supervisor Training at ACU Program* or similar (see section on Supervisor Training and Development) and the related requirements.

8.3 Stage 3 - Completion of Supervisory Experience

Staff will complete the required period of supervisory experience as an honours supervisor or as a co-supervisor for a master's by research or doctoral student and be mentored by a registered supervisor assigned by the Faculty (normally for one year).

9. Supervisory Statement

² Associate Supervisor within a team (where available) is one way of meeting the needs of academic staff seeking accreditation

The Supervisory Statement provides a pathway to ACU accreditation for experienced supervisors. The purpose of the Supervisory Statement is to fulfil one of the conditions for accreditation as a supervisor at the University and to provide an opportunity to reflect on supervisory practice.

In general, the Supervisory Statement will be used by staff newly appointed to ACU with previous experience of research supervision, the supervisory statement is included in the accreditation process through the Research Expertise Register.

Prospective ACU supervisors with prior experience but no specific training for the role, such as an accredited program, should address the Supervisory Statement in the Research Expertise Register setting out their approach to supervision and evidence of supervisory effectiveness. The Statement should outline:

- (a) the individual's approach to supervision and the rationale for this approach (e.g. roles played as a supervisor, means/methods of supervision, ways to resolve issues and dilemmas, etc.);
- (b) an outline of effective supervisory practice from the individual's supervisory experience (e.g. current research student load, number of successful completions, student publications, conference presentations and prizes, students' later careers, etc.);
- (c) insights gained from self-evaluation of supervisory practice (e.g. feedback from students, principal supervisors or mentors, personal reflections, thesis examiners' comments); and
- (d) possible future directions, areas of focus or development (see section on Continuing Professional Development).

10. Maintaining Accreditation

To maintain accreditation, supervisors are expected to:

- (a) fulfil their responsibilities as a supervisor;
- (b) maintain a satisfactory record of timely research degree completions by the research candidates they supervise;
- (c) maintain or enhance their research activity; and
- (d) participate in activities to continue their professional development as a supervisor.

Accredited supervisors may be asked to report on their supervisory activities and achievements during the year including professional development activities. The information may be used for government reporting requirements, ACU monitoring of the quality of the research environment and providing aggregated information on professional development needs for the Faculty and the University.

11. Supervisor Training and Development

11.1 General Requirements

Effective postgraduate supervision at ACU is evidenced by:

- (a) a quality learning and teaching environment at the postgraduate research level and a vibrant research culture;
- (b) supervisors' knowledge in relation to content, inquiry, policies, procedures and pedagogy; effective leadership and management of research projects and the supervisory process; and ethical attitudes and practices; and
- (c) student satisfaction with their research study experience.

Research supervisors are required to undertake training and development to achieve and maintain accreditation. The University provides professional development for members of staff and, where applicable, non-ACU supervisors. Programs include initial training in supervisory skills and practice and ongoing development activities.

Mentoring is an important element of professional development. Academic staff preparing to be supervisors should be mentored by an accredited supervisor as they work towards accreditation.

The URC, in cooperation with the RTSC and the Faculties, is responsible for:

- (a) ensuring the provision of training and development activities for supervisors across the University and within Faculties, and ensuring that staff and non-staff supervisors participate;
- (b) providing mentoring for new supervisors by linking them with more experienced supervisors; and
- (c) initiating or facilitating annual professional development activities for accredited supervisors and potential supervisors.

Supervisor Training at ACU

Graduate Research together with Research Services offers:

- (a) an online program of modules (Research Training Connect) for higher degree by research students;
- (b) workshops and seminars to meet specific researcher and higher degree by research student needs;
- (c) professional support for research initiatives undertaken by academic staff;
- (d) networking opportunities for research supervisors across the University; and
- (e) access to published resources for research supervisors and higher degree by research students.

11.2 Key Areas of Supervisor Development

The following key areas have been identified for supervisors' professional development:

- (a) Knowledge
- (b) Leadership and management
- (c) Interaction and communication
- (d) Ethical attitudes and practice
- (e) Inquiry
- (f) Pedagogy.

11.3 Initial Training Program

Professional development to prepare for supervising is a requirement of the supervisor accreditation process. Allowance is made through the Supervisory Statement for expertise acquired elsewhere, e.g. in the case of experienced supervisors joining the ACU staff. At the University, formal preparation for the supervisor's role is provided through the program *Supervisor Training at ACU*, which covers core requirements for supervisor training.

The *Supervisor Training at ACU* program is offered as a series of modules, all of which shall be online. The program incorporates elements of policy, theory and practice and enables participants to develop understanding, skills, knowledge and networks relevant to research supervision. The four modules in the program relate to:

- (a) Supervising in the ACU context: policies and procedures;
- (b) Conceptions of learning, research and supervision in the postgraduate research context (including roles and responsibilities);
- (c) Managing the supervisory process (structuring supervisory sessions, giving and receiving feedback, and facilitating the writing process); and
- (d) Quality in the postgraduate research context (the examination process, and reflecting on supervisory practice).

The *Supervisor Training at ACU* program provides participants with basic information including:

- (a) familiarisation with relevant policies and procedures relating to higher degrees by research, paying particular attention to:
 - (i) the role, responsibilities and duties of supervisors,
 - (ii) reporting procedures and administrative requirements,
 - (iii) guidelines for responsible practice in research, and
 - (iv) ethics in research, including issues concerning intellectual property and requirements for seeking ethics approval;
- (b) awareness of other policies and procedures relevant to supervising research in the ACU context;
- (c) resources and forms of support and assistance for postgraduate students available within the Faculties and the University;
- (d) nature and expectations of the PhD, professional doctorate by research and master's by research degrees, both discipline-specific and at University level;
- (e) expectations of supervisors and research candidates;
- (f) giving feedback and structuring supervisory sessions;
- (g) facilitating the writing process;
- (h) examination procedures; and
- (i) the structure and procedures in place within the Faculty and at University level for supporting supervisors when supervisory problems may arise, including:
 - (i) counselling a candidate regarding lack of progress/performance,
 - (ii) counselling a supervisor when a complaint has been received from a candidate about lack of supervisory input/commitment, and
 - (iii) mentoring for new supervisors, particularly when problems arise.

11.4 Mentoring

As part of professional development towards accreditation, a staff member is required to gain experience as a supervisor and to be mentored by an experienced principal supervisor.

Outcomes of successful mentoring in the context of postgraduate research supervision are expected to be improved self-confidence, collegiality, sense of research culture, interest in supervision and induction for supervisors as well as a better experience for research candidates. Mentoring provides for:

- (a) *the trainee or inexperienced supervisor*, a formalised means to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the supervisory relationship, increased self-confidence, reduced isolation, and induction into the culture and values of supervision;
- (b) *the experienced supervisor*, a formalised means to share knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the supervisory relationship, reduced isolation, and revitalised interest in supervision;
- (c) *the supervised candidate*, better supervision and more support to complete on time; and
- (d) *the School and Faculty*, improved functioning, raised standards of supervision and enhanced research culture.

11.5 Continuing Professional Development

To maintain accreditation, supervisors are required to participate in activities to inform and enhance their supervisory practice and normally at least one such activity must be completed each year. The University will report on the number and proportion of supervisors who complete training each year. To be reportable, activities must relate directly to research supervision (not simply to the supervisor's area of research expertise) and must be of at least half a day's duration.

Supervisors are reminded that professional development may take a variety of forms. Professional knowledge and expertise are enhanced not only by participating in formal programs but also by activities such as:

- (a) attending workshops that relate directly to research supervision;
- (b) contributing to programs for supervisors as a presenter or facilitator;
- (c) being a member of a School, Faculty or University committee charged with responsibilities for higher degree by research degrees;
- (d) attending a specialist postgraduate supervision conference;
- (d) assisting and advising inexperienced staff in a mentoring capacity; and/or
- (e) involvement in relevant professional education through a professional association.

12. Review of the Policy and Procedures

The University may make changes to this policy and procedures from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. Review of the policy will be initiated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominee within a five-year period