Introduction

This document sets out the guidelines on the procedures to be followed within the Faculty of Social Sciences in instances where students (based on advice from their supervisors and the Head of Postgraduate Studies) wish to transfer between research degrees (e.g., Master by Research or a Professional Doctorate to a Doctor of Philosophy).

Purpose

These guidelines are to be used in accordance with the University of Wollongong General Course Rules (http://www.uow.edu.au/handbook/generalcourserules/index.html), specifically the clause that states:

Transferring between Research Degrees
(http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rsc/hdrhb/UOW008953.html)

6. To transfer from a Masters by Research degree or a Professional Doctorate to a Doctor of Philosophy in the same field of study the candidate must:
   a. have completed sufficient study in the Masters-Research or Professional Doctorate program at this University to allow an assessment of the capacity of the student to undertake independent research. This would normally mean that candidates admitted to a program greater than 48 credit points would complete required coursework components of the degree and have completed approximately nine months of equivalent full-time candidature of their thesis component prior to application to transfer to a PhD;
   b. prove their capacity to undertake independent research by presenting a seminar reporting on the research topic to a group which must include:
      i. the primary supervisor, and/or co-supervisors
      ii. a member of the Faculty Research Committee (FRC) or the Head of Postgraduate Studies (HPS), and
      iii. an independent academic staff member with appropriate disciplinary expertise to appraise the research and requested transfer.

The primary supervisor will prepare a report on the candidate’s seminar which should be signed by the HPS. Once signed the final report will then be forwarded to the Research Student Centre for action.
Eligibility

Students enrolled in Masters by Research degree or Professional Doctorate programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences may be considered for upgrade to the Doctor of Philosophy degree if they have attained at least a Credit grade in each of the research training subjects; successfully presented a research proposal at the Masters levels; and conducted a period of at least nine (9) months of independent research on their topic.

Students who intend to upgrade to the Doctor of Philosophy program should work with their supervisors to plan a research study that would be appropriate at the Masters or Professional Doctorate level but could be extended to be appropriate for the PhD level. This would ensure that students who do not otherwise meet the upgrade requirements will still be in a position to appropriately complete their Masters/Professional Doctorate program.

Students whose EFTSLs have gone beyond the maximum time allowed for their currently enrolled courses will not be considered for an upgrade.

Procedures

Students wishing to be considered for upgrade to the Doctor of Philosophy should apply to the Head of Postgraduate Studies with a letter that indicates:

- A short summary of the study
- Work being undertaken within the current candidature
- Potential of the study to reach PhD standard
- A research plan to extend the study to the doctoral level

The application should be accompanied by a letter of support from the supervisors.

In considering the request for an upgrade, the Head of Postgraduate Studies will take into consideration:

- Eligibility requirements including coursework grades
- Letter of application for upgrade
- Progress reports previously submitted by supervisor(s)

Format

If the Head of Postgraduate Studies supports the planned upgrade based on the eligibility requirements noted above and the application to upgrade letter, the student will be asked to provide a seminar presentation with an accompanying written proposal (10,000 words maximum) which details the research already conducted and how the research will be developed for a PhD level submission.

Composition of the Review Panel

The oral presentation and written paper will be considered by a panel consisting of the student’s supervisors, two disciplinary experts (where appropriate, one of whom should be external to the academic unit of the supervisors), the Head of Postgraduate Studies or a member of Faculty Research Committee, and a student representative as an observer. The Head of Postgraduate Studies will act as the Chair of the panel. A review report will be prepared by the principal supervisor and signed by the Head of Postgraduate Studies. The signed report will then be forwarded to the Research Student Office for action. Approved upgrades will be effective in the subsequent session of enrolment.
The Chair of the Panel will complete the **Course Transfer Report** in discussion with the panel members. Results of the review assessment should be communicated verbally to the student at the end of the panel discussion, at which point the Review Form will be signed all panel members including the student. A written notification letter together with the Review Form will be sent to the student within five (5) working days.

The panel’s recommendations may include one of the following options:

- **Acceptance for upgrade to PhD**
- **Re-review of the upgrade proposal in 3 months**: If the proposal is deemed unsatisfactory, the student will be given a second opportunity to revise and present within 3 months of the first review. If the second review is also deemed unsatisfactory, the student will be advised to complete the currently enrolled course.

**Appeals**

The student will receive a written notification of the final outcome of the review from the HPS or Head of School (where the HPS is a supervisor) within five (5) working days.

The student has the right to appeal the panel decision. The appeal must be lodged in writing to the HPS or Head of School within ten (10) working days of receiving written notification of the decision and clearly state the reasons and include any supporting evidence. The grounds normally considered for an appeal include lack of due process in the review process, evidence of prejudice or bias during the review process, or additional/new information.

If no informal resolution can be found within the Faculty the student can launch a formal appeal (Stage 2) following guidelines in the HDR Academic Grievance Policy ([http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW058652.html](http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW058652.html)). This includes informal resolution in Stage 1 (in writing to HPS); Stage 2: formal resolution within Faculty (in writing to Research Training Director or Associate Dean Research); Stage 3: Student Ombudsman; Stage 4: HDR Appeals Committee.

**Related Documents and References**

The student will be sent the following documents upon registering for the upgrade proposal presentation:

- Guidelines on Transferring between Degrees
- HDR Course Transfer Report

Two weeks prior to the presentation date, panel members will receive:

- HDR Course Transfer Report
- Guidelines on Transferring between Degrees
- HDR Research Proposal Presentations Instructions for Chair
- A hard copy of the written paper