

Graduate Research Admissions Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Academic – Academic Board
Accountable Executive – Policy	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Graduate and Global Research)
Responsible Manager – Policy	Senior Manager, Graduate and Global Research
Review Date	26 August 2027

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Policy outlines the principles governing the eligibility and selection of applicants to La Trobe University's graduate research degrees.

(2) This Policy and its Procedures should be read in conjunction with the:

- a. [English Language Entry Requirements Policy](#)
- b. [Foreign Engagement Policy](#)
- c. [Graduate Research and RTP Scholarships Policy](#)
- d. [Graduate Research Support Policy](#)
- e. [Graduate Research Supervision Policy](#)

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to:

- a. all award graduate research courses, including those courses delivered jointly with other institutions;
- b. all applicants for, and candidates of, award graduate research courses including both domestic and international applicants at all campuses and in all study modes, including courses undertaken jointly with other institutions.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Approves the minimum entry requirements for a graduate research degree	Academic Board
Approves entry into a graduate research degree on behalf of the Board of Graduate Research (BGR)	Chair, BGR
Approves discipline-specific entry requirements	BGR

Key Decisions	Role
Approves the deferral of commencement of candidature	School Director of Graduate Research (SDGR) Chair, BGR

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(4) La Trobe University's graduate research application processes are transparent, equitable and clearly communicated to prospective applicants.

(5) The University admits applicants based on the consideration of merit, capacity, and strategic priorities and makes offers of a place to applicants assessed as having a reasonable expectation of success in their chosen graduate research degree and only where appropriate supervisory experience and resources are available.

(6) Applicants who meet the entry requirements will be considered for selection but are not guaranteed admission to graduate research degrees. The decision of whether to offer a place is at the sole discretion of the University, and may be subject to factors beyond the specific merit of an individual's application.

(7) Academic Board approves minimum entry requirements and English language requirements for University courses including graduate research degrees.

(8) Individual courses may have additional entry requirements to the minimum requirements set out in this Policy. Course entry requirements, including the University's English Language Requirements are published on the University's website.

(9) The Board of Graduate Research (BGR) makes the final decision on selection for admission to graduate research degrees. The Chair of the Board of Graduate Research (or nominee) may make executive decisions on behalf of the Board.

(10) The University supports pathways between AQF qualification levels and/or degree courses and reserves the right to establish targeted admission arrangements for La Trobe University students.

(11) The University does not permit transfer from a Master's degree (AQF9) to a doctoral research degree (AQF10).

(12) Admission to a graduate research degree does not guarantee award of a graduate research scholarship. For information on scholarship eligibility see the [Graduate Research and RTP Scholarships Policy](#).

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Application Requirements

(13) To be considered for admission into a graduate research degree, an applicant must:

- meet the entry requirements for the course, including [English Language Requirements](#), as published on the University's website;
- complete and submit the relevant application requirements as published University's website;
- supply any other documents requested by the University and/or School to determine suitability for admission, including (but not limited to) academic transcripts for current or past studies, academic reference(s), evidence of meeting the University's [English Language Requirements](#), a curriculum vitae, and evidence of time spent enrolled in any prior higher degree by research; and

- d. agree to the terms and conditions specified by the University and truthfully complete all declarations required in the application process.

(14) In addition, to be eligible to undertake a jointly awarded Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), whereby a student is enrolled to undertake the course jointly at the University and a nominated partner institution, an applicant must:

- a. meet the entry requirements for the course, including any language requirements, at both institutions; and
- b. agree to the terms and conditions of enrolment as described in the inter-institutional Joint PhD Program Agreement between La Trobe University and the partner institution and complete all declarations required in the agreement.

Part B - Academic Entry Requirements

(15) The University may make offers for a graduate research degree to applicants who meet the minimum academic entry requirement for the degree and may take into account other factors that demonstrate research preparedness in the relevant area.

(16) The University will only make offers where there is an appropriate fit between the applicant, proposed supervisors and school including appropriate support, infrastructure and strategic objectives. Schools and/or their proposed supervisors may request an interview with the applicant as part of the application process.

(17) The University normally expects prior qualifications to have been completed within ten (10) years of the proposed commencement date. Older qualifications may still be considered if the applicant can demonstrate current research capability through more recent relevant experience.

(18) Schools may set higher academic requirements, specify particular research requirements, or define alternative ways for applicants to demonstrate that they meet the academic entry requirements with the approval of the Board of Graduate Research. Discipline specific requirements will be published in a Schedule to the Graduate Research Admissions Policy.

Master's by research (AQF 9)

(19) The minimum academic requirement for entry to a Master's by research at La Trobe University is a three-year Bachelor degree in a relevant discipline completed within the last ten years with a weighted average mark of 65 or above for the whole degree.

(20) The minimum academic entry requirement for transfer to a Master's by research degree from a Bachelor (Honours) or Master's by coursework degree at La Trobe is a weighted average mark of 65 or above in the degree from which they are transferring.

Doctoral (AQF 10)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

(21) The minimum academic requirement for entry to a PhD at La Trobe University is a Master's by research degree in a relevant discipline completed within the last ten years assessed at a La Trobe Master's by research thesis standard of 70 or above.

(22) An applicant with a Bachelor (Honours) or Masters by coursework degree with a minor thesis of 10,000 to 20,000 words (depending on disciplinary norms) completed within the last ten years may be eligible for direct entry to the PhD where the minor thesis is assessed at a La Trobe Masters by research thesis standard of 70 or above.

(23) For joint degrees, where La Trobe University is the host institution, an applicant may be considered for admission

on the basis of confirmed candidature at the partner (home) institution.

(24) [Schedule A – Master’s by Research Thesis Grading Schema](#) and [Schedule B – Master’s by research Equivalence for a Minor Thesis Grade](#) should be referenced in determining whether the research component(s) of a Bachelor (Honours), Master’s by coursework degree with a minor thesis or ungraded Master’s by research degree meets the La Trobe Master’s by research thesis standard.

(25) Graduate Research Coordinators (or nominees) will nominate an appropriately qualified assessor independent of the proposed supervisory team to assess the written research component of the application at the La Trobe Master’s by research standard on a template provided by the Graduate Research School. The assessor may be external to La Trobe if required.

Professional Doctorates

(26) The minimum academic requirement for entry into a Professional Doctorate degree at La Trobe is either a four-year degree or a Masters degree in the same, or a cognate, professional domain as the professional doctorate, with a weighted average mark of 70 or above completed within the last ten years. In addition, applicants must have at least two full years (cumulative) of professional practice in the same or a cognate field, and, where applicable, be eligible for professional registration in Australia.

Part C - Alternate Pathways for Entry

Professional Knowledge

(27) Applicants who do not meet the academic entry criteria but who meet any of the following conditions may seek consideration for alternative entry on professional knowledge grounds:

- a. They have completed a bachelor level degree of at least 3 years (FTE) duration at La Trobe University where Honours is not available as a further study option, and have obtained a WAM of 70 or above.
- b. They have completed a bachelor level degree of at least 4 years (FTE) duration where Honours may be embedded in the degree structure and/or conferred on the basis of coursework outcomes, and have obtained a WAM of 70 or above.
- c. Their discipline context is one where professional accreditation normally involves the completion of both a Bachelor level degree of at least 3 years (FTE) duration and another AQF Level 8 or 9 qualification of at least one additional year’s duration (FTE), and have obtained a WAM of 70 or above in the most recent degree.

(28) Applicants wishing to be considered for alternative entry on professional knowledge grounds must provide the following special requirements in their application:

- a. A written statement describing how they believe their prior learning and/or professional experience demonstrates the attainment of AQF Level 9 learning outcomes, pursuant to discipline expectations.
- b. Evidence of prior learning, professional activity, or other activity relevant to the proposed research topic, that affirms AQF Level 9 learning outcomes, for example (but not limited to):
 - i. a peer reviewed publication, report, a piece or body of written assessment, or other written documents, or rendered creative works, pursuant to discipline expectations;
 - ii. a significant grant, patent or other commercialisation initiative related to the proposed area of research; or
 - iii. relevant work in industry of a duration of 6-months or more, including in academia, that demonstrates research capability, evidenced by an employer statement of capability.

Cultural Knowledge (First nations Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Applicants)

(29) Applicants who do not meet entry criteria but who identify as Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, may seek consideration for alternative entry on cultural knowledge grounds.

(30) To be considered for alternative entry on cultural knowledge grounds, an applicant must meet the requirements of the AIATSIS guide to Proof of Aboriginality. For the purposes of this policy, Proof of Aboriginality requires that the applicant submit a written statement describing how they met the three 'working criteria' defined by AIATSTS (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/proof-aboriginality>), together with one or more of the following items of documentation:

- a. a Letter of Confirmation from an Aboriginal corporation (or equivalent letter from a relevant Aboriginal community organisation) declaring their membership of that community.
- b. a statement of recognition from a community Elder. The letter must identify the Elder and include their contact details.
- c. a copy of a birth certificate or other formal record that demonstrates their relationship to an ancestor of First Nations heritage.
- d. a statement of recognition from a First Nations university executive (e.g. PVC-Indigenous) at La Trobe University.

(31) In addition to Proof of Aboriginality, applicants wishing to be considered for alternative entry on cultural knowledge grounds must provide the following special requirements in their application:

- a. a written statement describing what barriers have prevented them from undertaking prior study that meets normal admission requirements, and describing how they believe they possess knowledge equivalent to AQF Level 9 learning outcomes, pursuant to discipline expectations.
- b. any documentation that demonstrates (in writing and/or, where relevant, in another creative medium) mature cultural knowledge commensurate with discipline threshold requirements for entry to a graduate research degree, and which are relevant to the proposed research topic.

Other Equity Grounds

(32) Applicants who do not meet the standard entry criteria, and who are not eligible for consideration through professional or cultural knowledge pathways, but who belong to one of the following equity categories may seek consideration for alternative entry on other equity grounds.

(33) The equity categories in scope for consideration are:

- a. Australian or New Zealand Citizens or Australian permanent residents who are from Regional/Rural/Remote backgrounds and who reside in Regional/Rural/Remote locations in Australia where access to education may be limited;
- b. Australian or New Zealand Citizens or Australian permanent residents who meet criteria for being considered low socio-economic status;
- c. Australian or New Zealand Citizens or Australian permanent residents who are disabled, and who have experienced barriers to educational opportunity due to disability.

(34) Applicants seeking consideration for alternative entry on other equity grounds must provide the following special requirements in their application:

- a. a written statement describing what barriers have prevented them from undertaking prior study that meets normal admission requirements, and describing how they believe they possess knowledge equivalent to AQF

Level 9 learning outcomes, pursuant to discipline expectations.

- b. documentation that demonstrates (in writing and/or, where relevant, in another creative medium) knowledge commensurate with discipline threshold requirements for entry to a graduate research degree, and which is relevant to the proposed research topic.

(35) The special requirements for all alternative entry applications will be reviewed by a La Trobe University academic with sufficient academic, professional and/or cultural expertise to provide a judgement of their suitability.

(36) The Graduate Research School will provide a template form or set of instructions for how to submit an application for alternative entry, available on the Graduate Research School website.

Part D - Conditions of Approval

(37) The Board of Graduate Research will normally approve admission to candidature if it is satisfied that:

- a. the applicant is eligible for admission to candidature;
- b. the proposed program of research is suitable for the degree;
- c. the necessary supervision and research facilities will be available to the applicant to pursue the proposed program of research;
- d. the application is supported by the principal supervisor, the School Director of Graduate Research (or nominee), and where applicable, the Course Coordinator; and
- e. any additional requirements necessary to support the project for the case of external candidature are in place.

(38) Admission to candidature is also contingent on compliance with the Foreign Engagement Policy and other factors relating to the regulatory environment.

(39) Applicants who enrolled in a higher degree by research at another institution in Australia and withdrew without having completed that degree within three years prior to their proposed commencement date at La Trobe University will normally have the length of time for which they were previously enrolled (based on equivalent full-time student load) deducted from their maximum period of candidature at La Trobe University. The period of maximum candidature for applicants who were previously enrolled overseas will be considered on a case by case basis. The maximum period of candidature for each degree is detailed in the Graduate Research Candidature Policy.

(40) Per the [Graduate Research Candidature Policy](#), it is a condition of candidature that applicants must not be enrolled in another graduate research degree, whether at La Trobe University or another university, while undertaking a graduate research degree at La Trobe University, except where specifically authorised by the Chair, Board of Graduate Research, through a joint doctorate partnership.

Part E - Advice of Outcome

(41) An applicant who is made an offer of candidature by La Trobe University will be advised in writing of the following:

- a. the degree to which the admission relates;
- b. if candidature is full-time or part-time;
- c. the title of the approved thesis topic;
- d. any courses, subjects, seminars or other work required as a condition of candidature;
- e. the names of the supervisors;
- f. the campus or other approved location at which the candidate may pursue studies for the degree;
- g. whether candidature is being undertaken as part of a joint PhD or other form of partnership arrangement and any associated additional requirements; and

h. any special conditions relating to their candidature.

(42) An applicant who is not made an offer of candidature by the University will be advised in writing of the outcome.

(43) An applicant who is not made an offer of candidature by the University may re-apply for entry to a graduate research degree.

Part F - Deferral of an Offer of Candidature

(44) An applicant may apply to defer an offer of candidature for up to 12 calendar months from the original proposed commencement date.

(45) Applications to defer by up to 3 months must be approved by the applicant's principal supervisor and the School Director of Graduate Research (or nominee). Applications to defer an offer of candidature between 3 and 12 calendar months also require approval from the Chair, BGR.

(46) Applicants who wish to defer their offer by more than 12 calendar months from the original proposed commencement date will normally need to reapply for candidature.

Part G - Withdrawal of an Application or Offer of Candidature

(47) La Trobe University may withdraw an application or an offer of candidature where:

- a. the applicant requests that their application be withdrawn;
- b. the applicant fails to provide information requested for the purpose of assessing the application within ten business days of the request, or by the specified deadline;
- c. the applicant declines an offer of candidature;
- d. a Master's pathway applicant declines an offer of Master's by research candidature in order to instead complete their Honours degree;
- e. the applicant does not meet the conditions (if applicable) of their offer of candidature by the proposed commencement date;
- f. the applicant does not respond to an offer of candidature within the specified time frame;
- g. the course for which the offer has been made cannot be offered;
- h. supervision and/or resources for the proposed project are no longer available; or
- i. it is determined that an application contains fraudulent or misleading information.

Part H - Right of Review

(48) Applicants wishing to appeal a decision in relation to an application for graduate research candidature must do so in writing to the Board of Graduate Research within twenty (20) business days of the date of the written notice of the decision.

(49) The appeal will be considered by members of the Board who were not involved in the original decision.

(50) Applicants not satisfied with the outcome of any review may seek a review from the University Ombudsman.

Section 7 - Definitions

(51) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Applicant: a person who has made a formal application to undertake a course of study at La Trobe University but who has not yet enrolled in that course.
- b. Collaborative PhD: a La Trobe University Doctor of Philosophy degree jointly supervised by staff at La Trobe University and at a Partner Institution where the student is enrolled at La Trobe University only.
- c. Entry requirement: minimum required prior preparation for study, which may include but is not limited to, specific educational qualifications, prerequisites, professional experience and expertise, or other life experience with a demonstrable relevance to the field of study.
- d. Graduate Research Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), professional doctorates by research, and Master's by research.
- e. Home Institution: institution where the candidate spends the majority of their enrolled candidature in a Joint PhD.
- f. Host Institution: institution that the candidate attends while away from their home institution while enrolled in the Joint PhD.
- g. Joint PhD: a doctoral degree awarded by La Trobe University and nominated Partner Institution, who share the responsibilities of supervising, coordinating and examining a researcher's work towards a PhD degree.
- h. Research component(s): a subject, or subjects, in which students undertake a substantial piece of supervised research and produce either a combination of research papers, thesis, portfolio or project.
- i. Selection principles: the principles that govern selection into graduate research degrees at La Trobe University.
- j. Student is defined in the La Trobe University Act 2009 as:
 - i. a person enrolled at the University in a course leading to a degree or other award; or
 - ii. a person who is designated as a student or is of a class of persons designated as students by the Council.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(52) This Policy is made under the [La Trobe University Act 2009](#).

Status and Details

Status	Not Yet Approved
Effective Date	To Be Advised
Review Date	To Be Advised
Approval Authority	
Approval Date	To Be Advised
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
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