

Graduate Research Course Management Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

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| Policy Type and Approval Body | Academic – Academic Board |
| Accountable Executive - Policy | Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) |
| Responsible Manager - Policy | Senior Manager, Graduate Research |
| Review Date | 29 April 2028 |

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Policy describes the framework for the proposal of new graduate research courses and the revision, review, suspension and closure of existing graduate research courses.

Section 3 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

- a. All graduate research courses, including any graduate research courses developed in partnership with other institutions.

(3) The governance of coursework subjects in graduate research courses is outlined in the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#).

Section 4 - Key Decisions

| Key Decisions | Role |
|---|---|
| Endorses discipline-specific graduate research course concept proposal and business case; endorses minor and major revisions, and the suspension or closure, of discipline-specific graduate research courses; endorses the recommendations regarding discipline-specific graduate research courses in the 5-year review cycle. | Deans of School |
| Endorses graduate research course concept proposal and business case | Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee |
| Approves graduate research course concept proposal and business case | Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) (PVC (R)) |
| Approves the establishment of new graduate research courses | Academic Board |
| Approves minor revisions to graduate research courses | Board of Graduate Research (BGR) |
| Approves major revisions to graduate research courses | Academic Board |

| Key Decisions | Role |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Approves suspension of graduate research courses | Chair, Board of Graduate Research |
| Approves closure of graduate research courses | Academic Board |
| Approves recommendations of graduate research 5-yearly course review | Academic Board |

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(4) The University provides consistent principles and procedures to guide the University community in the design, approval, delivery, review, revision, suspension and closure of graduate research courses.

(5) The Board of Graduate Research is responsible for making recommendations to the Academic Board on all matters in relation to the profile of graduate research courses across the University and the structure of individual courses. Final approval is granted by the Academic Board.

(6) The Graduate Research School will own all graduate research courses at the University and is responsible for:

- a. initiating new University-wide course proposals and revisions for graduate research courses aligned with the University's strategic directions; and
- b. coordinating the regular review of graduate research courses.

(7) Schools are responsible for:

- a. initiating and endorsing new discipline-specific course proposals and revisions that are aligned with the University's strategic directions;
- b. ensuring the academic values and integrity of the research undertaken by candidates; and
- c. managing the governance and delivery of coursework subjects that form part of the graduate research courses in accordance with the [Course and Subject Management Procedure - Approvals](#), and associated [Schedule](#).

(8) The University seeks to offer graduate research courses of the highest quality and relevance. Graduate research courses will be:

- a. designed consistent with best practice in the national and international higher education sectors for higher degrees by research;
- b. developed to meet the needs of existing and future candidates and professions in accordance with the University's strategic directions designed to comply with the [National Code 2018](#) and the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#);
- c. approved based on consistency with the qualification categories defined in the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) as well as other criteria outlined in this Policy and Procedure; and
- d. subjected to regular strategic and academic review.

(9) The University will ensure that no candidate is disadvantaged by the revision or closure of a graduate research course.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - General

(10) The Board of Graduate Research co-opts the Chair of the University Coursework Committee and the Executive Director, Quality and Standards to its membership when considering any academic proposal to establish, revise, suspend or close a graduate research course.

Part B - New Graduate Research Courses

Development of Proposals to Establish Graduate Research Courses

(11) There are two components to the approval of all new courses:

- a. management approval; and
- b. academic approval

Management Approval of New Graduate Research Courses

(12) Proposals to establish a discipline-specific graduate research course will be completed by the Director of Graduate Research within a school.

(13) Proposals to establish a university-wide graduate research course will be completed by the Graduate Research School.

(14) Where a new discipline-specific course is proposed:

- a. the relevant School Director of Graduate Research will prepare a course concept proposal on behalf of the school in which the course will be delivered.
- b. the relevant Dean(or nominee)is responsible for endorsing the course concept on behalf of the school in which the course will be delivered.
- c. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for reviewing the course concept proposal and endorsing it proceeding to the development of a business case. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) may seek advice from the New Course and Majors Sub-Committee (NCMSC) of the University's Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) before making a decision.
- d. following endorsement of the course concept the Director of Graduate Research is responsible for completing a business case on behalf of the school in which the course will be delivered.
- e. the Dean (or nominee) is responsible for the review and endorsement of the business case.
- f. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for reviewing the business case and submitting it to the New Course and Majors Sub-Committee (NCMSC) of the University's Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) for review.
- g. the NCMSC submits the course concept and business case to the Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) for endorsement.
- h. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for the approval of the course concept and business case.

(15) Where a new university-wide course is proposed:

- a. the Graduate Research School will prepare a course concept proposal.
- b. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for reviewing the course concept proposal and endorsing it proceeding to the development of a business case. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) may seek advice from the New Course and Majors Sub-Committee (NCMSC) of the University's Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) before making a decision.

- c. following endorsement of the Course Concept, the Graduate Research School is responsible for completing a business case.
- d. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for reviewing the business case and submitting it to the New Course and Majors Sub-Committee (NCMSC) of the University's Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) for review.
- e. the NCMSC submits the course concept and business case to the Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee (CPSC) for endorsement.
- f. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for approving the course concept and business case.

(16) The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) may approve or reject proposals or refer submissions back to the submitting school for further action.

Academic Approval of New Graduate Research Courses

(17) The proposers of new courses will consult with key stakeholders, and any others as appropriate, before finalising the course proposal for academic endorsement and approval in the Course Management System.

(18) All proposals to establish graduate research courses must be submitted for academic governance review as follows:

- a. Dean (or nominee) for endorsement (discipline-specific courses only);
- b. the Board of Graduate Research for endorsement; and
- c. the Academic Board for approval.

Part C - Changes to Graduate Research Courses

Changes to Graduate Research Courses

(19) Proposals to revise a university-wide graduate research course are initiated by the Graduate Research School.

(20) Proposals to revise a discipline-specific graduate research course are initiated by the Graduate Research School or by the school in which the course is delivered.

(21) Where revisions to existing courses are proposed the approval pathway will depend on whether the changes are classified as a minor or major revision.

Minor Revisions

(22) A minor revision to a graduate research course may include but is not limited to the following:

- a. any changes to the campus or mode of delivery;
- b. any changes to no more than two existing core or core choice subjects within a graduate research course;
- c. any changes to elective subjects; or
- d. any changes to the available areas of study or research.

(23) All proposals for minor revisions to a graduate research course must be submitted for review as follows:

- a. Dean (or nominee) for endorsement (discipline-specific courses only); and
- b. the Board of Graduate Research for approval.

Major Revisions

(24) A major revision of a graduate research course may include but is not limited to the following:

- a. the introduction of core coursework subjects;
- b. changes to more than two existing core or core choice subjects;
- c. a change to the name of the graduate research course;
- d. any changes in admission criteria including English Language Proficiency (ELP) per the [English Language Entry Requirements Policy](#);
- e. any changes in examination requirements; or
- f. any change which involves joint enrolment with another institution.

(25) All proposals for a major revision must be submitted for review as follows:

- a. Dean (or nominee) for endorsement (discipline-specific courses only);
- b. the Board of Graduate Research for endorsement; and
- c. the Academic Board for approval.

Part D - Graduate Research Course Suspension and Closure

(26) Proposals to suspend a graduate research course to new enrolments for up to three years require:

- a. documentation of the course(s) and cohort(s) affected, and a management plan for impacted graduate research candidates and any in-progress offers from the Graduate Research School.
- b. consultation with all impacted groups, including the delivery of any shared coursework subjects as appropriate.

(27) All proposals to suspend a graduate research course to new enrolments must be submitted for review as follows:

- a. the Dean (or nominee) for endorsement (discipline-specific courses only); and
- b. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research for approval on behalf of the Board of Graduate Research. The Chair BGR will report back to the Board of Graduate Research at their next meeting on any course suspensions.

(28) All proposals to close graduate research courses must be submitted for review as follows:

- a. the Dean (or nominee) will endorse the recommendation (discipline-specific courses only);
- b. the Board of Graduate Research for endorsement of the closure; and
- c. the Academic Board will approve the closure.

(29) Proposers of course closures will consult with key stakeholders as appropriate, before submitting the proposal for academic endorsement and approval.

Part E - Rights of Candidates when Graduate Research Courses are changed.

(30) The Graduate Research School will advise all candidates who are affected by minor or major changes to a graduate research course, or by course suspension or closure in advance of the changes. This includes candidates who:

- a. have been made an offer for a graduate research course;
- b. have been admitted into a graduate research course;

c. are on a leave of absence or whose candidature has lapsed from a graduate research course.

(31) Where there is a major change to a graduate research course that affects currently enrolled candidates, the Graduate Research School will determine whether all or some students may be moved to the changed course version without detrimental effect to the substance of their education experience or outcomes. Where it is intended that students transfer to a changed course version, candidate consultation activities and outcomes must be documented in the proposal prior to submission to the Board of Graduate Research.

(32) Where it is proposed to close or suspend intakes for a graduate research course, the University is bound to teach out the course or to provide a viable alternative and notify candidates of the change.

(33) In the case of onshore international candidates, failure to provide a full teach-out or viable alternative in these circumstances will result in the University being in Provider Default – having made an offer to candidates that is no longer being honoured. Where this occurs, these candidates are entitled to compensation and additional financial penalties apply under [ESOS](#) legislation. Where applicable, schools are responsible for the payment of any such financial penalties.

Part F - Implementation and Publication

(34) Following the required approval, the Graduate Research School will consult with Student Systems Support who will take all necessary steps to establish, revise, suspend or close the University course and update student systems and databases. The schools will take all necessary steps to establish, close, suspend or revise any coursework subjects in accordance with the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#).

(35) The Graduate Research School will be responsible for making any required applications or changes to CRICOS registration in consultation with International Operations and Compliance.

(36) Standard publication of new or revised courses occurs following the final approval and finalisation of the record in the Course Management System, noting that a course cannot be advertised to international students who are to be onshore for its delivery prior to attainment of its CRICOS registration.

(37) Additional descriptive materials may be developed for publication purposes, in both digital and print channels as approved by the Graduate Research School. Such materials must reflect the approved course. The quality and accuracy of the course information is assured under the provisions in the [Course and Subject Management Procedure - Approvals](#).

Part G - Graduate Research Course Review

(38) Graduate research courses will be subject to an annual and five-yearly review.

(39) Performance data, including load, completion times, research outputs and student survey outcomes for each graduate research course will be submitted annually to the Board of Graduate Research.

(40) Every five years the Board of Graduate Research will establish one or more panels drawn from the Board and key stakeholders to conduct a review of all research courses. The review will consider:

- a. all annual performance data for all courses for the previous five years, benchmarked against the sector;
- b. the profile of all graduate research courses at the University;
- c. student feedback on educational experiences;
- d. the design and content of each course of study, including:
 - i. the expected learning outcomes,
 - ii. the methods for assessment of those outcomes,

- iii. the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes; and
- e. take account of emerging developments in relevant fields of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.

(41) The recommendation of the review panel for individual courses may be:

- a. re-accreditation
- b. re-accreditation with amendments
- c. no re-accreditation

(42) Review recommendations for discipline-specific graduate research courses must be endorsed by the Dean (or nominee) prior to endorsement by the Board of Graduate Research and approval by Academic Board.

(43) Following the endorsement of review recommendations, the Board of Graduate Research will work with the Schools to initiate any required proposals under Parts A-D of this Procedure.

Section 7 - Definitions

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

- a. Business Case: A collation of specific documents that rationalise a new course, subject, major, specialisation or module proposal submitted by a school. It provides an analysis of the opportunities, needs, capabilities, and financial implications, ensuring alignment with the University's strategic objectives and feasibility for implementation. The specific documents included in the Business Case may vary depending on the type of proposal.
- b. Discipline-specific courses: courses that are not offered university-wide.
- c. Graduate Research Course: A degree at Level 9 or 10 of the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#), which is comprised of at least two-thirds research and no more than one-third coursework, namely Masters by research degrees, professional doctorates, and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). May also be referred to as a higher degree by research.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

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

Status and Details

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| Status | Current |
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