

Graduate Research Candidature Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Academic – Academic Board
Accountable Executive - Policy	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)
Responsible Manager - Policy	Senior Manager, Graduate Research
Review Date	15 April 2029

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Policy sets out the requirements for undertaking candidature in a graduate research degree at La Trobe University in accordance with Section 4.2 of the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) and the procedures for variations to candidature.

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

- a. [Graduate Research and RTP Scholarships Policy](#)
- b. [Graduate Research Examinations Policy](#)
- c. [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#)
- d. [Graduate Research Supervision Policy](#)

Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to all La Trobe University:

- a. campuses
- b. graduate research degrees
- c. staff; and
- d. candidates admitted to a graduate research degree

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Approval of variations to candidature (within the provisions of this Policy and Procedures)	As detailed below
Review and approve exceptional variations to candidature	Chair, Board of Graduate Research (BGR) (or delegate)

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(4) La Trobe University is committed to providing a quality experience for all graduate research candidates to facilitate the completion of quality research projects within the maximum allowable candidature period.

(5) The Board of Graduate Research determines all requirements for graduate research candidature in accordance with relevant standards and codes including the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), and the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#).

(6) Candidates enrolled in a joint degree program who wish to vary their candidature arrangements may need to follow different application processes and/ or meet different provisions due to the requirements of the partner institution. The partnership agreement between La Trobe University and the partner organisation will stipulate how candidature variation requests will be managed.

(7) Any exceptions to the provisions in this Policy and associated Procedures will be made only with the approval of the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research or authorised delegate.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - General

(8) All timeframes are given in calendar weeks/months/years and are not adjusted for part-time candidates unless stated otherwise.

(9) International candidates on a student visa who apply to vary their candidature must check the conditions of their visa and consult with the La Trobe International Compliance and Assurance Team through ASK La Trobe regarding any significant changes to their candidature.

Part B - Period of Candidature

(10) All graduate research degrees at La Trobe University have a prescribed minimum, expected and maximum periods of candidature.

(11) The minimum, expected and maximum periods of candidature for the respective graduate research degrees are as stated in the table below:

Degree	Minimum period (calendar months irrespective of study rate)	Expected period (EFT)	Maximum period (EFT)
Master's by Research	12 months*	20 months	24 months
Doctoral degrees	24 months	39 months	48 months

*The minimum period of candidature of a Master's by Research Degree may be longer depending on the educational background of the candidate (as specified in volume of learning guidelines in the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#)).

(12) Candidates transferring to a Master's by Research degree from an approved Bachelor (Honours) or Master's by coursework degree at La Trobe will be enrolled for a minimum period of eight (8) months, and a maximum period of twelve(12) months (EFT) or for a maximum period of eighteen (18) months retrospectively.

(13) For candidates transferring from another graduate research degree, the period of candidature may be adjusted to account for any prior EFTSL consumed in the original degree.

(14) Candidates are expected to submit their thesis and any other required components for examination by the expected work submission date, which coincides with their expected period of candidature. Candidates and their supervisors are expected to consider the expected candidature length when proposing or designing research projects, and to manage project expectations according to the time available.

(15) In order to maximise a candidate's chances of completing their degree within the expected period of candidature, candidates should commit to an average of 38 hours per week if enrolled full-time and 19 hours per week if enrolled part-time.

(16) Except for occasional research activities requiring an acute or especially focused time commitment (e.g. fieldwork, or experiments with time-bound features), candidates are not normally expected to spend more than an average of 38 hours per week (FTE) attending to research activities, and are not normally expected to be undertaking research activities in unconventional work times (e.g. evenings or weekends).

(17) Expected work submission and maximum completion dates will be affected by some variations to candidature as outlined in relevant sections of this procedure.

(18) The expected work submission date for individual candidates may be extended up to the maximum completion date where variations to candidature are approved, including postponements to progress reporting dates as outlined in the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#).

(19) Candidates who do not submit their thesis by the expected work submission date, or by the end of the grace period where applicable, may be placed 'at risk' and asked to complete a Progress Support Plan as described in the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#).

(20) The elapsed time for enrolment in any degree will not normally exceed the maximum period of candidature in that degree. Approval to extend candidature beyond the maximum completion date may only be approved in exceptional circumstances as outlined in the relevant section below.

(21) All candidates must normally complete their graduate research degree within ten (10) calendar years of the date of commencement, including any periods of leave of absence, extensions and periods of lapsed candidature, whether they are enrolled on a full or part-time basis.

Study Rate

(22) Candidates may enrol either full or part-time in any graduate research degree and may apply to change their study rate during their candidature.

(23) Candidates who are seeking to change their study rate from full-time to part-time are required to provide:

- a. reasons for their request; and
- b. a statement describing how they will maintain contact with their supervisory team and meet the weekly time commitment for their studies.

(24) International candidates on a student visa are normally required to maintain a full-time enrolment while studying in Australia. An international candidate seeking to vary their study rate must check the requirements of their visa and consult with the International Compliance and Assurance Team through Ask La Trobe regarding any significant changes to their candidature.

(25) Scholarship recipients should check the conditions of their scholarship before applying to enrol part-time.

Applications and Approvals for a Change to Study Rate

(26) Candidates seeking to change their study rate during their candidature must follow the instructions on the [Graduate Research School website](#) and online Graduate Research Change of Study Rate form.

(27) A change to study rate will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. International Compliance and Assurance Team, in the case of international candidates.

Types of Leave

Recreation Leave and Personal Leave

(28) The entitlement to recreation and personal leave does not affect the time of progress milestones, the period of candidature or, for international candidates, their student visa.

(29) All candidates are entitled to:

- a. twenty (20) business days (FTE) cumulative recreation leave per calendar year; and
- b. ten (10) business days (FTE) cumulative personal leave per calendar year.

(30) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander candidates are further entitled to five (5) business days non-cumulative cultural and ceremonial leave per calendar year.

(31) Candidates may access personal leave to attend to personal illness or injury; to provide care to a family member who is ill or injured; or in the case of an unexpected emergency. A candidate may also be granted personal leave as a result of special or exceptional circumstances.

(32) Candidates who are in receipt of a stipend scholarship will continue to receive their scholarship during periods of recreation and personal leave.

(33) Where a candidate has exhausted their annual entitlement for recreational or personal leave they may apply for a leave of absence as outlined below.

Applications and Approvals for Recreation Leave and Personal Leave

(34) Candidates must arrange recreation leave and, where possible, personal leave in advance with their principal supervisor.

Candidates do not need to formally apply with the Graduate Research School to access their annual recreation and personal leave entitlements.

Leave of Absence

(35) Leave of absence is a period of non-enrolment for factors which prevent candidates from engaging in their degree. Insurance and other protections, such as ethics approvals, do not apply to the candidate during a period of non-enrolment. Candidates on leave of absence must cease their research due to the legal, ethical and insurance risks of continuing their research when not enrolled.

(36) International graduate research candidates who are studying in Australia on a student visa may only apply for leave of absence for documented compassionate or compelling reasons. International candidates should seek advice from the La Trobe Student Advising team through Ask La Trobe regarding any application to apply for a leave of absence while in Australia on a student visa. Where leave is granted for compassionate or compelling circumstances, international graduate research candidates will need to provide documentary evidence and maintain compliance with

their visa conditions. La Trobe University will report all approved leave of absence to the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#).

(37) Normally, an application for a leave of absence should be for more than ten (10) business days. Where a candidate has exhausted their personal or recreational leave entitlements, a candidate may apply for a leave of absence less than ten (10) business days.

General Leave of Absence (Domestic)

(38) Domestic candidates are normally entitled to apply for an aggregated total of twelve (12) months leave of absence (independent of study rate) for any reason that may prevent them from engaging in their degree.

General Leave of absence (International Candidates on a Student Visa)

(39) International candidates on a student visa are normally entitled to apply for an aggregated total of twelve (12) months leave of absence (independent of study rate) for documented compassionate and compelling grounds that may prevent them from engaging in their degree. This may include applications for pregnancy or childbirth. International candidates on a student visa should consult with the International Compliance and Assurance team through Ask La Trobe regarding any application to apply for a leave of absence while in Australia on a student visa.

Specific Types of Leave for Domestic Candidates

(40) Domestic graduate research candidates may apply, as specified, for the following types of leave of absence in addition to the aggregated total of twelve (12) months leave of absence.

Jury Service Leave (Domestic Candidates Only)

(41) Domestic candidates may be approved for jury service leave where:

- a. their supervisor attests that their research will not be adversely affected by the estimated period of absence;
- b. a copy of the notice from the Juries Commissioner is provided with their application.

Defence Reserve Service Leave (Domestic Candidates Only)

(42) Domestic candidates may be approved for Defence Reserve Service Leave where a copy of the notice from the Defence Reserve Service is provided with their application.

Parental and Partner Leave

(43) Domestic candidates may apply for up to twelve (12) months leave per instance where they are the primary carer for a new-born child or of a newly adopted child under sixteen (16) years of age. Such leave should commence no earlier than six (6) weeks prior to the expected birth date, unless medical evidence is provided to the contrary, or from the date of the placement of an adopted child.

(44) On-shore international candidates on a student visa are not eligible for specific parental and partner leave under the conditions of their visa. Any international candidate on a student visa considering leave of absence for pregnancy or childbirth should refer to the provisions under general leave of absence in Clause 39 above.

(45) Domestic candidates who are partners of primary carers of a newly born or adopted child may apply for up to eight (8) weeks partner leave per birth from the date of birth or placement of an adopted child.

(46) Any period of parental or partner leave will not diminish a domestic candidate's entitlements to other forms of leave.

(47) Candidates who hold a stipend scholarship should refer to the scholarship's Terms and Conditions regarding

provisions for paid parental or partner leave.

Applying for Leave of Absence

(48) Candidates must normally apply for leave of absence at least ten (10) business days in advance of the intended period of leave. Candidates seeking an extension to a period of approved leave of absence must apply at least ten (10) business days prior to their approved return date.

(49) Where a candidate is prevented from lodging a timely application for leave of absence due to medical or exceptional compassionate grounds they must supply appropriate evidence as to the circumstances leading to the application. The extent to which a leave of absence may be backdated may be constrained by government census dates.

(50) Applications for leave beyond the normal provisions will only be considered on medical or compelling grounds. In such circumstances a candidate may be granted more than the normal maximum of twelve (12) months (but not more than twenty-four (24) months in total). Parental and partner leave is a separate entitlement.

(51) Applications must normally be for a minimum period of ten (10) business days and a maximum period of twelve (12) months and are not normally approved during the first six (6) months of candidature.

(52) When a candidate takes leave they do not consume candidature. The Graduate Research School will adjust progress reporting dates, expected work submission dates and maximum completion dates accordingly.

(53) Candidates who apply for leave of absence while formally enrolled in coursework subjects will need to liaise with their Subject Coordinator to discuss completing the requirements for those subjects (see relevant section on coursework in this Policy concerning the consequences of untimely withdrawal).

(54) Scholarship recipients should check the conditions of their scholarship before requesting paid leave. International sponsored candidates must seek advice from the Sponsorship Programs team through Ask La Trobe regarding any application to apply for a leave of absence while in Australia on a student visa.

(55) There may be circumstances where the University will place a candidate on a leave of absence without the candidate having submitted an application due to illness or incapacity, and this will be communicated to the candidate.

(56) La Trobe University may elect to put graduate research candidates on leave of absence in exceptional circumstances following the procedure outlined in the [Complex Conduct Assessment and Management Policy](#).

Applications and Approvals for a Leave of Absence

(57) Candidates applying for leave of absence must follow the instructions on the Graduate Research School [website](#) and online Graduate Research Leave of Absence form.

(58) Applications for leave of absence under the normal provisions described above will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the approval of:

- a. the Graduate Research Coordinator;
- b. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of student visa holders; and
- c. Chair, Board of Graduate Research for applications beyond normal provisions.

Resumption of Candidature After Leave of Absence

(59) Candidature will be automatically resumed when a candidate's leave of absence has expired.

(60) Candidates who do not resume their research or have regular interaction with their supervisory team following their approved return date, and who do not respond to reasonable attempts to communicate from La Trobe University, will be considered absent without leave (AWOL) from candidature.

(61) Under the provisions of the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 La Trobe University must notify the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) if an international candidate on a student visa breaches the conditions of their visa. Failure to return from leave of absence on the approved resumption date constitutes such a breach and following notification to Department of Home Affairs (DHA), this may result in the cancellation of their student visa.

Variations to Periods of Candidature

Submission of Thesis Prior to Minimum Candidature

(62) Where a candidate and principal supervisor are satisfied that the quality of a thesis meets the requirements for the relevant degree, prior to the minimum period of candidature specified for that degree, they may seek an early submission of thesis.

Applications and Approval to Submit Prior to Minimum Candidature

(63) Candidates must advise of their intention to seek early submission through the appropriate notification of intent to submit form as required by the [Graduate Research Examinations Procedure - Thesis Requirements, Submission and Retention](#).

(64) The confirmation that the thesis is ready for submission prior to the minimum period of candidature will be made on the Authority to Submit form as required by the [Graduate Research Examinations Procedure - Thesis Requirements, Submission and Retention](#).

(65) The Graduate Research School will action an early submission of thesis following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor; and
- b. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Requests for Extension Beyond Expected Candidature Period

(66) The Graduate Research School will adjust the expected work submission dates (and therefore the expected period of candidature) of candidates under conditions outlined in the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#).

Requests for Extension Beyond Maximum Candidature

(67) Candidates who do not submit their thesis within their maximum period of candidature will normally have their enrolment lapsed (see lapsed candidature section in this Policy).

(68) Candidates will only be given an extension to their candidature beyond their maximum completion date in exceptional circumstances. The period of extension will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

(69) La Trobe University reserves the right to charge tuition fees to any candidate who is given an extension of candidature beyond the maximum completion date. Candidates who are granted extensions beyond their maximum period of candidature will be liable for further student amenities fees, and tuition fees where relevant, for the extended period.

Applications and Approval for an extension to candidature

(70) Candidates seeking to apply for extensions beyond the maximum period of candidature must follow the instructions on the [Graduate Research School website](#) and online Graduate Research Extension or Postponement form. Applications must be completed at least twenty (20) business days prior to the maximum completion date.

(71) International candidates on a student visa will be required to extend their student visa and Overseas Student Health Cover where an application to extend candidature beyond the maximum period of candidature is approved by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research. Sponsored international candidates must also consult with International Compliance and Assurance via Ask La Trobe concerning a request to extend with their sponsor in these circumstances.

(72) The Graduate Research School will action an extension to candidature beyond the maximum period of candidature following approval from:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the School Director of Graduate Research;
- c. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of international candidates on a student visa; and
- d. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Part C - Candidature

Induction and Orientation

(73) All candidates will be offered induction and orientation to graduate research, through face-to-face and/or online programs, at university level and through their department, discipline or school.

(74) Within the first three months of candidature, candidates and their principal supervisor will complete a Graduate Research Induction Checklist to ensure that the following matters have been, or are being, addressed:

- a. the candidate is developing a research project plan with a design and scope that maximises their chances of completing their research within the expected period of candidature;
- b. the candidate understands the requirement to interact regularly with their supervisory team, to undertake progress milestones and complete Progress Reports;
- c. the candidate's Progress Committee has been appointed;
- d. the candidate is aware of research education and other La Trobe University resources that are available to them;
- e. the candidate has an understanding of research integrity, including the need to conduct research responsibly, to observe proper authorship and citation conventions, apply for ethics or other approvals for the project, and to ensure their choice of topic does not breach any relevant legislation;
- f. the candidate has discussed with their supervisor the responsible use of Generative AI in graduate research;
- g. the candidate is aware of their rights and responsibilities and understands the requirement to comply with all relevant La Trobe University and graduate research training policies and their associated procedures and schedules;
- h. any specific resources required for the successful completion of the project within the expected period of candidature has been discussed;
- i. the candidate is aware of any requirements of their discipline, department or school, including any requirements for safety induction.

Coursework in Graduate Research Degrees

Compulsory Coursework

(75) The requirements for the completion of compulsory coursework, where relevant, are outlined in the La Trobe

University Handbook. Supervisors and Progress Committees may also require individual candidates to undertake specified coursework to support their research.

(76) The entire coursework enrolment for any graduate research degree may not exceed the amount permitted under the Higher Education Support (Commonwealth Scholarships) Guidelines 2025.

(77) The Principal Supervisor, Course Coordinator or Graduate Research Coordinator will confirm any coursework or clinical placement(s) that are compulsory for candidates prior to enrolment.

(78) Candidates may seek an exemption for any required coursework on the basis of any equivalent work or study completed prior to or during candidature, where they meet the following criteria:

- a. Candidates have completed cognate subjects in a previous degree within ten (10) years of the commencement of their degree - which may have also been the basis for admission;
- b. Candidates have demonstrated sufficient research experience relevant to their program to warrant an exemption.

(79) Requests for exemption must be assessed by the relevant course coordinator, endorsed by the School Director of Graduate Research, and approved by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

(80) Candidates who have compulsory coursework in their graduate research degree may normally only undertake the confirmation milestone after such coursework has been successfully completed where these are specified in the La Trobe University Handbook.

(81) Candidates who do not successfully complete compulsory coursework will be subject to the steps outlined in the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#).

Clinical Placements

(82) Where clinical placement(s) are a compulsory requirement of a particular graduate research degree these must be satisfactorily completed prior to the candidate undertaking their final pre-submission milestone or submitting their thesis for examination.

(83) Where candidates fail to satisfactorily meet the requirements of any clinical placements they will be subject to the steps outlined in the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#).

Supplementary (Non-Compulsory) Coursework

(84) Candidates may also seek, or as a condition of their candidature progress management be required, to undertake coursework during their candidature to support their research training through applying to either formally enrol, or informally audit, such additional subjects.

(85) A candidate who audits a subject accesses the learning materials for that subject in the same manner as an enrolled student, including attending classes, but does not formally enrol, does not attempt assessment, nor receive a graded outcome for the subject, nor does the subject appear on their transcript. Candidates who audit subjects can apply for access to the Learning Management System (LMS) through the subject coordinator following approval.

(86) Candidates who elect to formally enrol in coursework without approval will incur tuition fees pertaining to that enrolment.

Withdrawing from Individual Subjects

(87) Penalties, both academic and financial, may apply when candidates withdraw from an individual subject in which they are formally enrolled, or take a leave of absence from a course in which there are coursework requirements. The

application of any such penalties will depend on the timing of the leave or withdrawal and the applicable census dates.

Applications and Approvals to audit, enrol or vary enrolment in coursework subjects

(88) Candidates seeking to formally enrol in elective coursework, or vary their enrolment in any coursework, must follow the instructions on the [Graduate Research School website](#) and online Graduate Research Add or Remove Subjects form.

(89) A request to audit a subject after consultation with, and endorsement from, their principal supervisor will follow the approval steps outlined in the [Enrolment Procedure](#).

(90) A request to enrol in or vary supplementary (non-compulsory) coursework will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor; and
- b. the Subject Coordinator.

(91) A request to enrol in or vary compulsory coursework (i.e. enrolling or changing a core choice subject or changing the enrolment period for a core subject) will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor; and
- b. the Course Coordinator.

Change of Topic

(92) Candidates may change their research direction or topic under the conditions outlined below.

(93) Where a candidate seeks to make a change in their research topic (minor or major), the candidature consumed will continue to be calculated from their original commencement date.

Applications and Approval to Change Topic

(94) Candidates and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that any change of research topic does not breach any legislation.

(95) Candidates seeking to make a change to their thesis topic – either minor or major must follow the instructions on the [Graduate Research School website](#) and online Graduate Research Change in Thesis Topic form.

(96) A minor change to a research topic, for example the rewording of the title or refinement of the topic, will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the approval of the Principal Supervisor.

(97) A major change to a research topic, for example a significant change in the direction of research or research methodology, and any associated changes in enrolment, will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the School Director of Graduate Research; and
- c. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of international candidates.

(98) Where an international candidate from a sanctioned country, or where an international candidate's research project involves Critical Technologies, seeks to make a substantive change in topic, assessment of the topic will need to be undertaken according to the [Foreign Engagement Policy](#).

(99) Where a change in research direction involves the appointment of a principal supervisor in another school, the

change must be approved by the relevant School Directors of Graduate Research in both the original and new schools.

(100) In these circumstances the respective Dean or School Directors of Graduate Research are responsible for negotiating any redistribution of resources for the candidate and any funds for completion.

Transfers Between Research Degrees

(101) Transfer from one higher degree by research to another at the same AQF level or to a degree at a lower AQF level may occur as a result of either a candidate request, or a Progress Committee recommendation.

(102) La Trobe University does not permit the transfer from a Master's by Research or Master's by Coursework degree to a doctoral research degree.

(103) Candidates may initiate a request to transfer to another research degree at a scheduled milestone, or at a specially convened meeting of the Progress Committee. It is generally beneficial for the candidate to transfer earlier in candidature.

(104) Candidates seeking to transfer to another degree at a milestone will need to meet the milestone and any coursework requirements at the level described for the appropriate milestone for their target degree.

(105) A Progress Committee may also recommend that a candidate be considered for a transfer as an outcome of a finding of unsatisfactory progress, as outlined in the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#) and [Graduate Research Show Cause Procedure](#).

(106) When a candidate transfers from one graduate research degree to another the candidature consumed will continue to be counted from the commencement date of the original enrolment. The expected and maximum completion dates will be adjusted where the new degree is at a different level.

(107) If a candidate has no remaining candidature entitlement when they apply to transfer to another research degree, they may enrol for up to three months full-time or equivalent to write up and submit their thesis.

Applications and Approvals for a Transfer between Research Degrees

(108) Candidates seeking to transfer to another research degree must follow the instructions on the Graduate Research School website.

(109) International candidates who hold a student visa who seek to, or have been recommended to, transfer to another degree may be subject to the approval of their sponsors (where applicable) or may be required to apply for a new student visa.

(110) Candidates may only transfer to a CRICOS-approved course. Candidates in this situation should contact the International Compliance and Assurance team via Ask La Trobe before seeking to transfer.

(111) The Graduate Research School will action a transfer to another degree following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the School Director of Graduate Research;
- c. the Chair of the Progress Committee (where relevant);
- d. the Course Coordinator (where the degree transferring into includes compulsory coursework);
- e. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of international candidates on a student visa; and
- f. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Outside Research

(112) Candidates are expected to attend a La Trobe campus regularly unless an application for outside research has been approved.

(113) Candidates may be approved to pursue part or all of their graduate research degree away from their approved campus or location at La Trobe as long as:

- a. appropriate facilities and resources are available to support the candidature;
- b. the activities planned during the off-site research will support the candidate's research project or professional development;
- c. arrangements are made for regular contact between the candidate and their supervisory team; and
- d. the candidate complies with all relevant policies and procedures and completes all progress milestones.

(114) All forms of outside research are considered part of candidature and do not result in any adjustment to progress reporting, or expected work submission and maximum completion dates.

(115) All candidates undertaking outside research must adhere to the [Travel Management Policy](#).

Short-Term Study Away

(116) Candidates may normally spend up to twelve (12) months away from their approved campus or location during candidature for any research-related purpose, such as participation in conferences, field work or an exchange program. This does not include local trips within reasonable commuting distance from their approved campus or location.

(117) Candidates should seek information through their principal supervisor and Graduate Research Coordinator for possible sources of funding for study away.

(118) Candidates who seek to spend more than three months on study away must ensure that arrangements for continued supervision are in place, which may include temporary supervision at their destination.

(119) Study away arrangements for international candidates on a student visa must not compromise their ability to meet their visa conditions and their Confirmation of Enrolment (COE) will remain active while they are on approved study away.

(120) The University will continue to monitor enrolment and progress during approved periods of study away.

(121) La Trobe University does not approve study away to an overseas destination classified at Level 4 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Applications and Approvals for Study Away

(122) Candidates applying for study away must follow the instructions on the [Graduate Research School website](#) and online Graduate Research Study Away form.

(123) The Graduate Research School will action the study away variation following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the Chair, Board of Graduate Research where the travel is international.

(124) Where travel includes an overseas destination classified at Level 3 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Chair, Board of Graduate Research will seek advice from the Risk Office before reaching a decision.

(125) Candidates who seek to have more than twelve (12) months study away will require approval from the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research in addition to the approvals in the clause above.

(126) Where a candidate seeks to extend an approved period of study away they must lodge a fresh application twenty (20) business days prior to the expiry of the previously approved study away period. Candidates must be aware that they risk the loss of appropriate insurance cover if they overstay the originally approved period of study away without an approved extension.

(127) International candidates on a student visa who wish to apply for study away are advised to check the conditions of their visa to ensure that they may travel in and out of Australia. Candidates from sanctioned countries may require additional approvals.

Internships

(128) Candidates who have successfully confirmed their candidature and who are making satisfactory progress may apply to participate in an internship. Normally, internship opportunities should be arranged in advance with supervisor advice, within in the first eighteen (18) months (FTE) of candidature.

(129) Full-time candidates may participate in an internship on a full-time basis or on a part-time basis if they are also engaged in their studies up to a full-time study load.

(130) Part-time candidates may participate in an internship on a part-time basis or may apply to change their study rate to full-time for the duration of the internship.

(131) Internships will be approved subject to the availability of:

- a. a host organisation and a suitably qualified supervisor and/or mentor in that organisation; and
- b. a research project in the organisation that is of relevance to the candidate's research topic and professional development.

(132) Internship arrangements must be governed by written agreements between all parties including candidates, La Trobe University and the host organisation.

Applications and Approvals for Internships

(133) Candidates will apply separately to participate in an internship through a process detailed on the Graduate Research School website.

(134) Participation in an internship will be subject to the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the Graduate Research Coordinator;
- c. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of international candidates on a student visa; and
- d. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Partnerships

(135) Candidates who complete their degree externally under an agreement between La Trobe University and another educational or other external organisation will be subject to our policies, procedures and relevant legislation as may be amended from time to time, except where alternative provisions are specified in the respective agreements.

(136) The partnership agreement between La Trobe University and the external organisation will document how the requirements for supervision, support, progress monitoring, candidature management, appropriate intellectual climate

and other resources and other matters relating to candidature will be facilitated.

Applications and Approvals for Partnerships

(137) Candidates will apply separately for such degrees as a normal part of the admissions process.

External Candidature

(138) Candidates may apply to enrol as an external candidate independently of a collaborative agreement with another educational or other external organisation where the conditions for outside research that are outlined in the Candidature Policy can be met and where:

- a. they do not reside within reasonable commuting distance of a La Trobe University campus; and/or
- b. the requirements of the research project are better served at another location, for example clinical settings.

(139) International candidates on a student visa who wish to apply for external candidature are advised that their Confirmation of Enrolment will be cancelled. This may result in visa cancellation during periods when they are offshore and international visa holders should check the conditions of their visa to ensure that they may travel in and out of Australia.

(140) While La Trobe University will support all candidates to successfully complete their graduate research degree it may not be possible for external candidates to receive the same level of support that is provided to on-campus candidates.

(141) Where an application for external candidature is approved, an agreement must be signed by the candidate and all approvers that documents how the requirements for supervision, progress milestones, appropriate intellectual climate and other resources will be met.

(142) La Trobe University does not approve external candidature for an overseas destination classified at Level 4 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Applications and Approvals for External Candidature

(143) Prospective candidates seeking to be considered for external candidature must indicate that this is the case when applying for admission to a graduate research degree.

(144) Candidates who accept an offer of candidature at a La Trobe University campus may not normally transfer to external candidature within the first twelve (12) months after enrolling, except where the grounds for seeking a transfer could not reasonably be foreseen at the time of admission.

(145) Candidates enrolled at a La Trobe University Campus who seek to change their status to external candidature more than twelve (12) months after enrolling must complete the appropriate form available on the Graduate Research School website and Graduate Research External Candidature form.

(146) The Graduate Research School will action the variation to external candidature following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the Director of Graduate Research;
- c. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of international candidates on a student visa;
- d. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Concurrent Enrolment

(147) Candidates may not enrol in two graduate research courses at any university concurrently.

(148) Full-time candidates may only enrol in another coursework degree or diploma, concurrently with their graduate research degree, in exceptional circumstances, such as where:

- a. enrolment in a professional qualification is sought in the final stages of the graduate research degree; or
- b. a case can be made for complementary training.

(149) Candidates who seek to enrol concurrently in any two separate courses are subject to the same minimum completion requirements and must complete the relevant number of discrete subjects in each course in order to qualify for each award.

Applications and Approvals for Concurrent Enrolment

(150) Candidates seeking concurrent enrolment in another degree or diploma must apply in writing to the Graduate Research School.

(151) The Graduate Research School will action the concurrent enrolment following the approval of:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the Graduate Research Coordinator;
- c. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of international candidates on a student visa; and
- d. the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Part D - End of Candidature

(152) Candidates cease to be enrolled in their graduate research degree through the submission of their thesis for examination or the following mechanisms.

Withdrawal

(153) A candidate may withdraw from their graduate research degree at any time, unless the Board of Graduate Research has decided to terminate a candidate's enrolment. It is recommended that candidates discuss any intention to withdraw with members of their supervisory team, Graduate Research Coordinator and/or Progress Committee prior to taking such action.

(154) A candidate enrolled in a Master's by Research Pathway degree who wishes to revert to their Bachelor Honours degree can be re-admitted to complete their previous degree in consultation with the Graduate Research School at any time prior to the submission of their Master's by Research thesis.

(155) Where international candidates on a student visa withdraw from their degree, La Trobe University is required to notify the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) of the discontinuation of their studies. This may result in the cancellation of their student visa.

(156) The Graduate Research School will arrange for any scholarship payments or further fee liabilities to cease upon withdrawal of candidature. Candidates intending to withdraw must do so in advance as a late application may result in overpayment of funds that must be recovered.

(157) Candidates who withdraw from their graduate research degree prior to their maximum candidature date, who subsequently seek to re-enrol within three years of that withdrawal, may apply to revive their candidature.

(158) Candidates who seek to re-enrol in a graduate research degree after three years has elapsed from their date of withdrawal must reapply for admission in the normal way and the candidate is considered to be new.

Applications and Approvals for Withdrawal

(159) Candidates seeking to withdraw from their course must follow the instructions on the Graduate Research School [website](#) and online Graduate Research Withdrawal of Candidature form.

(160) The Graduate Research School will action the withdrawal following receipt of the form. In the case of international candidates on a student visa, advice must first be sought from the International Compliance and Assurance team.

Absent Without Leave (AWOL)

(161) A candidate may be considered absent without leave if they:

- a. fail to return to their studies after a period of approved leave of absence; or
- b. do not attend a La Trobe University campus regularly and have not obtained approval for outside research; or
- c. fail to maintain regular interaction with their supervisory team and do not respond to reasonable attempts by La Trobe University to contact them.

(162) Candidates and their supervisory teams must agree to ways of working and frequency of meetings or interaction. A minimum of fortnightly interaction for full-time candidates and monthly for part-time candidates is recommended throughout candidature. The length of time before considering a candidate to be AWOL will depend on these agreed ways of working; however, action should be taken no later than two months after the last contact with the candidate.

(163) If the Principal Supervisor believes a candidate is AWOL after making reasonable attempts to engage with them, they must notify their Graduate Research Coordinator.

(164) If the Graduate Research Coordinator is satisfied that the candidate is AWOL and reasonable engagement attempts have been made, they must notify the Graduate Research School (GRS) and provide relevant background information.

(165) The Graduate Research School will write to the candidate advising them that they have been identified as AWOL, and outlining their options to take leave, withdraw, or re-engage with their studies. The communication will state that failure to respond within twenty (20) business days will result in withdrawal of their candidature. For international candidates, a copy of this communication will be sent to the International Compliance and Assurance team.

(166) If the candidate does not respond within twenty (20) business days, they will be withdrawn from candidature and sent official notification of their withdrawal and future options to re-engage with their studies. La Trobe University is required to notify the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) when an international candidate on a student visa is withdrawn from their studies. This may result in the cancellation of their student visa.

(167) If the candidate notifies the GRS of their intention to apply for Leave of Absence or withdraw, the GRS will acknowledge the response and advise that they have ten (10) business days to submit the relevant form. Failure to submit the form within this timeframe will result in withdrawal from candidature.

(168) If the candidate wishes to re-engage with their studies, they must arrange an ad hoc meeting with their Progress Committee within four (4) weeks to discuss and agree a Progress Support Plan (PSP) to support their return. If the candidate fails to attend the meeting or agree on a PSP within four (4) weeks, or subsequently stops maintaining regular contact during the PSP period, the Chair BGR will review the case to determine whether the candidate is AWOL and should be withdrawn from candidature, or whether they should not be considered AWOL and their progress should be managed under the provisions of the [Graduate Research Progress Policy](#).

Lapsed Candidature

(169) Candidates who do not submit their thesis prior to their maximum completion date, and who have not received an approved extension, will have their enrolment lapsed for a period of twelve (12) months.

(170) International candidates on a student visa whose candidature has lapsed must be aware that La Trobe University is required to notify the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) of the discontinuation of their studies. This may result in the cancellation of their student visa.

(171) All lapsed candidates may continue to access Information Services and Library services during a period of lapsed candidature. However, lapsed candidates have no entitlement to access supervision or La Trobe University resources such as laboratories, and are not covered by La Trobe University's insurance arrangements. Supervisor responsibilities in relation to lapsed candidates are described in the [Graduate Research Supervision Policy](#).

(172) Candidates may submit their thesis at any time prior to the expiry of the 12-month lapsing period under the conditions of the [Graduate Research Examinations Policy](#).

(173) A single period of lapsed candidature may not normally be extended beyond twelve (12) months. Candidates who have not submitted their thesis after twelve (12) months of lapsed candidature will normally be withdrawn.

Termination

(174) The Board of Graduate Research may terminate a candidate's enrolment:

- a. where a candidate has failed to show cause as to why their candidature should not be terminated, as outlined in the [Graduate Research Show Cause Procedure](#);
- b. where a candidate has provided fraudulent or misleading information in their application that has only come to light after they have been enrolled in their degree;
- c. through the application of a penalty under the [Academic Integrity Statute 2015](#) or [General Misconduct Statute 2009](#).

(175) A termination will be actioned by the Graduate Research School following the conclusion of any applicable appeal procedures.

(176) Where an international candidate on a student visa receives a written notice of termination La Trobe University is obliged to report the candidate's change in status to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). This may result in the cancellation of their student visa.

(177) A candidate who has been terminated may not revive their candidature and may not normally reapply for the same degree until three years after the date of termination.

Revival of Candidature

(178) Candidates who have withdrawn from candidature who seek to return less than three (3) years since their withdrawal may apply to revive their candidature.

(179) Candidates applying to revive will need to detail any change of research project and supervision arrangements at the time of their application. Any prior period of candidature will be deducted from the period of candidature for the current enrolment.

(180) Candidates will be liable for any applicable fees for the remaining period of candidature once their enrolment is revived.

(181) Candidates whose enrolment has been withdrawn for failing to submit their thesis within the maximum

allowable lapsed period will only be allowed to revive their candidature under exceptional circumstances.

Applications and Approvals for Revival of Candidature

(182) Candidates seeking to revive must follow the instructions on the Graduate Research School Website and Revive Candidature Application form.

(183) The Graduate Research School will action the revival following approval from:

- a. the Principal Supervisor;
- b. the School Director of Graduate Research;
- c. International Compliance and Assurance, in the case of any international candidate (whether or not they are student visa holders); and
- d. Chair of the Board of Graduate Research.

Part E - Review of Decisions

(184) A candidate who is dissatisfied with an outcome or decision in relation to the procedures outlined in this document, or who believes that La Trobe University policies or procedures have not been correctly followed, may in the first instance approach the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research for a review.

(185) Where a candidate is dissatisfied with a decision made by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research they may pursue a complaint through the steps outlined in the [Student Complaints Management Policy](#) or through the office of the University Ombudsman.

(186) Candidates are also eligible to lodge a complaint with the [National Student Ombudsman](#). For further information on complaints considered by the National Student Ombudsman, go to Making a Complaint/National Student Ombudsman (NSO)

Section 7 - Definitions

(187) Nil.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

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

- a. [Graduate Research School website](#)

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	4th May 2026
Review Date	15th April 2029
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	4th May 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Manager - Policy	Rebecca Lubansky Senior Manager, Graduate Research
Enquiries Contact	Graduate Research School