

Graduate Research School

# Supervisor induction workshop

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# Higher Research Degrees at Massey University



# The Massey PhD Thesis

The PhD is a 360 credit research degree which comprises a 100,000 word thesis or equivalent creative work and exegesis that makes an **original contribution to the knowledge of the subject** with which it deals.

- Familiarity with, and understanding of, relevant literature
- Comprehensive study of topic
- Appropriate methods adopted and applied
- Research findings suitably set out and accompanied by adequate exposition
- Satisfactory quality of English and presentation
- [See Guide to presentation of theses](#)

# Taking on a doctoral student

Why do you want to do it?

What do you need to consider?

Department strategy/workloads

Academically

Character traits

# Expectations of primary supervisor

- Expertise in the field of study
- Understanding of Massey regulations, policies & guidelines that relate to doctoral research
- Provide a collaborative research environment for the student
- Be willing to commit around 150 hours/year
- Provide timely and informative feedback
- Include co-supervisors in supervisory matters
- Be aware of the student's background and issues that might be impacting on them and be able to point them in the direction of appropriate help
- Monitor the student's progress and ensure that they are performing as would be expected
- Have a very clear set of expectations that is agreed with the student for the candidacy and that is revisited on a regular basis



# What are a supervisor's responsibilities?

Teacher?  
Mentor?  
Career advisor?  
Counsellor?  
Coach?

# Requirements to become a doctoral supervisor

To become a primary supervisor and therefore be on the supervisor register

Have seen a student through to completion as a co-supervisor

Have attended a Supervisor Induction Workshop

# The role of the Doctoral Research Committee

## Members

Dean– A/Prof T Riley

## College Representatives

A/Prof Valentyna Melnyk(Business, PN), Prof Sally Morgan (Creative Arts, WN),  
A/Prof Christine Cheyney(H&SS, PN), Prof Andy Shilton (Science, PN), Prof Bernhard Breier (Health,  
Albany)

## Campus Representatives

To be filled (H&SS, WN),  
Prof Ian Fuller (Science, PN)  
Prof Kathryn Rountree (H & SS, Albany)

## AVC(Research) Nominee

A/Prof Leigh Signal(Health, Wellington)

## Academy for Maori Research & Scholarship nominee

Dr Spencer Lilley (H&SS, PN)

## Academic Board nominees

A/Prof Barry Borman(CPHR Wellington)  
Prof Jenny Carryer (Health, PN)

## Doctoral Student Representatives

Aniek Hilken(Full-time, PN)  
Jacqui Burne(Part-time -Institute of Education PN/Albany)

# The Graduate Research School

# The Massey University PhD Candidate

- One of 1000 Doctoral Candidates
- On 3 campuses – 62% Manawatu, 26% Albany, 12% Wellington
- In 5 Colleges/Schools – 45% Sciences, 19% Humanities & Social Sciences, 19% Health, 14% Business, 3% Arts
  - ✓ 50% international
  - ✓ 5% Maori, 1% Pasifika
  - ✓ 60% female
  - ✓ 80% full-time

# Candidature Management

Candidate



Supervision Panel



Head of Academic Unit or Postgraduate Representative



DRC Representative



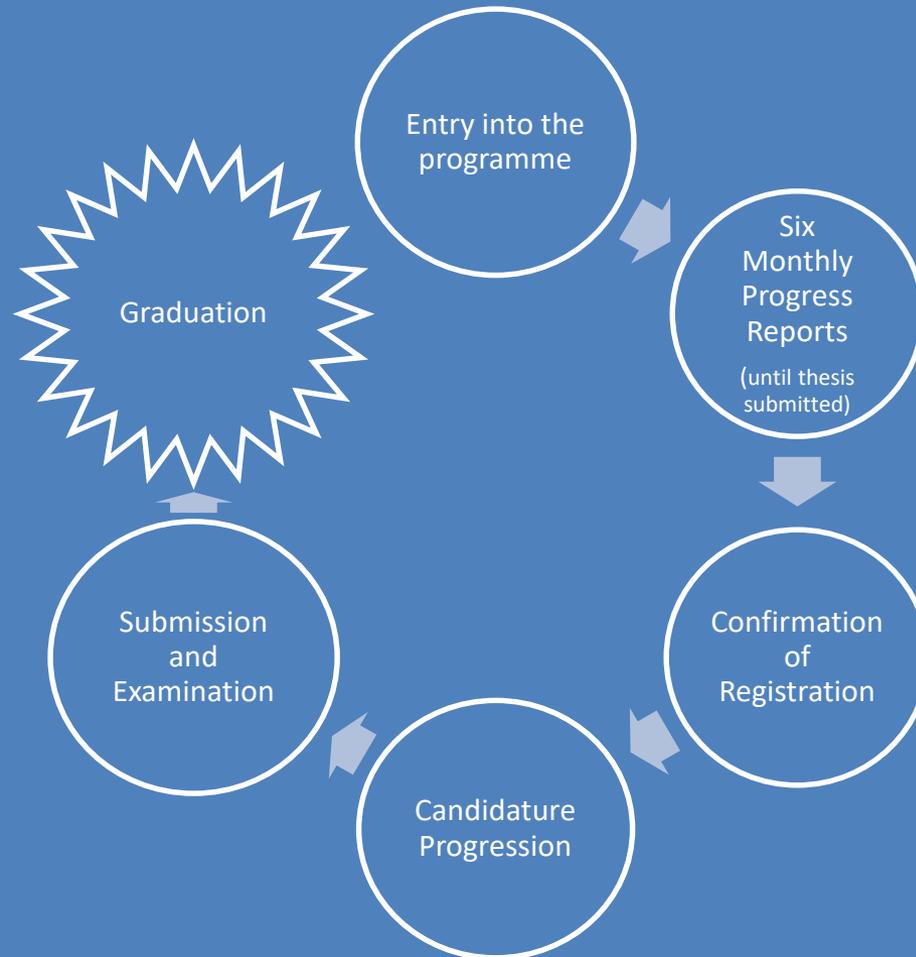
Chair, DRC



DRC



# Life Cycle of a Doctoral Candidate



## Things to consider ...

- What do you do when a student
  - goes AWOL
  - has communication skills that are clearly a lot weaker than their IELTS score would suggest
  - is facing very difficult personal circumstances
  - a student is stuck, the research is not developing
  - has too many competing demands
  - has not reached what you consider acceptable at confirmation stage
  - is clearly not going to make the submission date
  - is not listening to your suggestions/ideas
  - and yourself are clearly not getting on



# What we will cover

Enquiries

The admission process

Assessment

Data

Provisional registration

Some considerations

Academic decision making-panel

# Interesting data

- In 2016
- 1618 applications (1313 were international)
- 339 progressed to offers (762 declined, 463 withdrawn)
- Currently we have 1000 doctoral students
- 50% are international
- Most students do not complete in less than 4 years

# Enquiries

Contact Centre/International Recruitment/GRS/Academic Units

## Template

Thank you for your enquiry...Please visit our web page ...

Do you have funding?

- Tuition fees (\$6-12,000)
- Living costs (approx. \$15,000/year depending on location)
- V limited number of scholarships
- Need to allow 4 years

Have you searched our expertise database ...

If you are still interested please supply

- All transcripts and grading legends
- A current CV
- IELTS test results
- Research proposal?
- Cover letter?

Write a research proposal and cover letter

In the proposal we will be looking for

- A sense of what you hope to achieve
- Your understanding of the literature
- Research methods you might use
- Your ability to communicate effectively
- Alignment of your research interests with those of academic staff in the department

In your cover letter indicate

- Your motivation for studying a PhD
- What relevant experience you have of research

# Assessment

- Admissions team are experts in international qualifications
- NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre)
- NOOSR (National Office for Overseas Skills Recognition)
  - Transcripts/Grading legends
  - Research Experience
  - CVs
  - Referee reports

# Admissions/Registration Process

Applicant applies for a student ID

Completes online application

Application is screened

Applicant invited to supply all documents

GRS assess eligibility

Academic Unit assess academic suitability

Dean/GRS checks

Offer issued

Applicant signs offer and pays fees

GRS sends receipt

Applicant applies for visa

Student arrives and completes provisional registration process with supervisor

## Just Remember:

# The Consequences of Poor Selection

- Personal and professional consequences for candidate: saving face, financial, familial, career, health.
- Financial and resourcing consequences of wrong admission decisions are enormous.
- Premature termination of research projects is undesirable.
- Accountability and responsiveness to doctoral candidates are at risk.
- Supervisor overload, poor supervisor-supervisee relationships, poor academic outcomes for candidate



# Don't Forget:

## Admission is a Binding Contract

- An **unconditional offer** of PhD admission gives the contractual right to take up the PhD place within one year
- During the **unconditional offer** period an applicant may sell their house, give up their job and vacate their home country to undertake the PhD
- **Supervisor consent and commitment** is crucial before an unconditional offer is made
- **No *volte face*** - You can't just change your mind!
- **Be empowered too!** Don't accept an applicant if you think they do not have the right characteristics!

# Taking on a doctoral student

Some 'not uncommon' scenarios: 6 months into the programme the student ..

- has completely run out of money
- can follow instruction but cannot formulate own ideas
- is unable to write clear sentences in English, despite having met the English Language entry requirements
- wants to change research topic and work with another supervisor

## Other considerations

- Difficulty of finding work-family members
- Difficulties being apart from family
- It is not possible to work full time and study full time
- It is lonely and often tedious
- There is NO job guarantee at the end
- Understanding of what it means to write a 100,000 word document- have they seen one and talked to others who have completed a PhD
- Expectations (services, supervision, location, research culture)
- Are there issues in country of origin (e.g currency devaluation)

# Taking on a doctoral student

What do you need to consider?

- Department research strategy/workloads
- The student
  - Academic Background
  - Research capability
  - English language ability
  - Characteristics
  - Fit
  - Awareness of what they are letting themselves in for



## Conditions for A Better Fit

- Condition 1: The right people **apply** for doctoral study
- Condition 2: The right applicants are **admitted** for doctoral study

Admission is a decision based on an **academic assessment**.

The decision carries the intrinsic confirmation that a PhD place exists.

Each PhD place is, by definition, unique.

# Demonstrating Research Competence

- Mastery of your subject
- Research insight
- Respect for the discipline(s)
- Capacity for independent research
- Ability to communicate results and relate them to the broader discourse

But there's so much more ...

# Potential Candidate Characteristics

In addition to knowledge of the discipline, including technical aspects, candidates must have clear potential to:

- **formulate** an avenue of research, and plan accordingly, within the discipline's parameters
- **execute** that research in a balanced fashion, within the norms of the discipline
- **analyse and contextualise** that research to due standard
- **communicate and defend** the research in front of peers
- **independence of thought and action**, coupled to the ability to listen and accept advice
- **Outstanding communication skills**
- **Ability to draw inferences and insights**

## Entry Requirements: Beyond Grades and Language

Expectations	Ways to Assess
Skills and abilities	Interview, references, capability statement
Motivation	Check CV for false starts, interview
Ability to work independently	Research thesis, interview, references
Initiative	CV, References, interview to probe what they know about you
Creativity and independence of thought	Interview inviting ideas about new work
Critical	Interview seeking critical commentary