



Curtin University

# *HDR Student Orientation*

JULY 2026

Graduate Research School



# ***Welcome and Key Messages***

**Professor Gretchen Benedix**

Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Research

# Acknowledgement of Country

Curtin University acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognize their continuing connection to land, waters, and community.

► [Watch: Welcome to Country — Simon Forrest \(Captioned\)](#)



# Today's Overview



## Welcome to Curtin University

Who we are, our values, and global presence.

## Overview of the HDR Experience

Support frameworks, rights, responsibilities, and your first 90 days.

## Milestones

Key checkpoints from Research Proposal to Pre-Submission.

## Research Funding Support

Grants, internships, and financial support available to you.

## Important Resources

Where to find help — academic, personal, and administrative.



# About Curtin



Curtin is a **global university** with campuses in **Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Dubai, Mauritius and Colombo.**



Founded in **Western Australia**, we are the state's **most popular and most culturally diverse** university.



Within WA, we have **four campuses**: **Curtin Perth, Curtin Perth city, Curtin Kalgoorlie and Curtin Midland.**



More than **58,000 students** are studying at Curtin; **one-quarter** are **international students.**



## CURTIN VALUES

Building on a foundation of integrity and respect, and through courage, we will achieve excellence and have an impact on the communities we serve.





**What are you looking forward to the most in your HDR journey?**



# What are you hoping to learn today?



**What was the main factor that influenced your decision to undertake a Research degree at Curtin?**

## About Me



### Ms. Rebecca Firth

#### Director, Graduate Research Studies

I have more than **20 years' experience** supporting Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates and supervisors across the Australian higher education sector. Prior to joining Curtin in 2021, I spent 17 years at Monash University leading graduate research operations and candidature services.

As Director, Graduate Research Studies, I oversee HDR admissions, scholarships, candidature management, examination, policy and governance. My focus is on creating clear, effective, and student-centred processes that support successful research outcomes while maintaining academic quality and compliance.



# About the Graduate Research School

Central support team, dedicated to enabling research



## HDR Admissions

The Graduate Research School manages the admissions process for all HDR students.



## Scholarships

The Graduate Research School oversees the awarding of scholarships and other financial support, such as Research Support Funds.



## Milestones

The Graduate Research School helps ensure HDR students meet milestones and deadlines.



## Thesis Examinations

The Graduate Research School manages the thesis examination process.



## Training and Development

The Graduate Research School provides specialised training designed for HDR students, as well as supporting HDR Internships and student contracts.



## Stay Connected — Your HDR Peer Network



Research can feel isolating at times. Building connections with your peers early makes a real and lasting difference throughout your candidature.

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### Do This Now (2 minutes)

Share your contact details with the people at your table or in your group. Choose a simple way to stay in touch — Teams, WhatsApp, email — whatever works best for you.

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### Do This Next (in ~2 weeks)

Catch up for a coffee or a quick online check-in. Share how you're settling in, ask questions, swap tips, and support each other through the early weeks.

📌 You don't have to do your HDR alone. Your peers are one of your most valuable supports — small connections today can make a big difference over the journey.

# HDR Student Support Framework

Curtin provides a comprehensive HDR support framework to guide candidates throughout their research journey and support their development as independent researchers.

## Supervisors

Provides academic guidance, feedback and mentorship to support your development as an independent researcher.

## Thesis Chair

Provides independent oversight, chairs milestone reviews and can assist when issues arise.

## Graduate Research School

Provides central support from admission through to examination.

## School Director of Graduate Research

Provides School-level oversight of your HDR candidature, approves key candidature decisions.



# Your First Six Months

The early phase of your candidature sets the foundation for everything that follows. Here's what to focus on month by month.

## Month 1

- Meet regularly with your supervisors
- Complete all enrolment checks
- Complete Research Integrity Training & the RIG

## Months 2–3

- Develop your research proposal
- Begin your literature review
- Attend HDR training sessions
- Start building your HDR network

## Months 4–6

- Prepare for Milestone 1
- Finalise data management arrangements
- Explore funding and internship opportunities

 These are the tasks students most commonly wish they had prioritised earlier. Getting them right sets you up for a smoother candidature.



# Supervisors and Students Should Agree On...

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Clearly define what is expected of both the supervisory team and the student, including availability, feedback turnaround times, and decision-making authority.

## **Milestones and Deadlines**

Agree on research milestones and key deadlines early and revisit them regularly to ensure the project remains on track.

## **Communication and Feedback**

Establish preferred channels and frequency for meetings, progress updates, and written feedback to avoid misalignment.

## **Authorship and IP Agreements**

Discuss ownership and usage rights for research outputs, co-authorship arrangements, and any IP implications from the outset.



# Student Rights and Responsibilities

All HDR students have both rights and responsibilities as members of the Curtin research community. Familiarising yourself with these from day one will help you navigate your candidature with confidence.

## Your Responsibilities

- Confirm and maintain your enrolment
- Uphold Curtin Values and the Student Charter
- Align with Academic Integrity principles
- Meet all agreed deadlines
- Provide feedback when requested
- Use ICT resources appropriately
- Adhere to relevant statutes, rules, policies, and procedures

## Your Rights

- Right of appeal against academic or administrative decisions
- Student privacy and data protection
- Access to support services and resources
- A safe and respectful research environment

Further information:

[curtin.edu.au/students/essentials/rights/](https://curtin.edu.au/students/essentials/rights/)





# Academic Integrity, Authorship and AI

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are becoming increasingly popular and can be helpful in research. However, it is crucial to understand the ethical implications and Curtin's specific guidelines before incorporating these tools into your work.

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## Thesis Authorship

Your thesis must represent your own original intellectual contribution. You are responsible for understanding your authorship expectations and ensuring your work is not simply generated or reproduced by AI.

## Academic Integrity Resources

Consult Curtin's Academic Integrity Policy and the Library UniSkills guide for specific guidelines on acceptable research practices, referencing, and the use of AI tools.

## Curtin HDR AI Guidelines

Curtin has specific guidelines around the use of AI within a thesis. Scan the QR code or visit the GRS website to access the current policy and guidance.



# Intellectual Property Policy

Understanding who owns the research you create is an important part of your HDR candidature. Curtin's Intellectual Property Policy sets out the rules clearly.

## Students Generally Own Their IP

As a general rule, HDR students own the intellectual property they create during their candidature — unless specific arrangements have been agreed upon (e.g., industry-funded projects or collaborative research agreements).

## Discuss IP Early with Your Supervisor

Have an early conversation about IP with your supervisory team. Review the University's Intellectual Property Policy and Procedures to understand commercialisation implications, rules, and procedures before your research progresses.

## Exceptions? Contact the IP Team

If an exception to the standard policy is required — for example, due to an industry partnership or external funding arrangement — contact the IP team to seek guidance before proceeding.



# Your HDR Journey



Each milestone is a structured checkpoint to support your progression, identify issues early, and confirm you are on track to complete your degree.

# Milestone Requirements — All Three at a Glance

Each milestone builds on the last. Here is a summary of the key requirements for all three milestones to help you plan your candidature from day one.

## Milestone 1 — Research Proposal

PhD: 6 months FTE | MPhil: 3 months

*Confirm project scope and feasibility*

- Research Proposal: thesis title, abstract, methodology, budget and timeline
- Research Initiation Guide (via Blackboard)
- Turnitin Similarity Report
- PELA (English language assessment as required by Faculty)
- Apply for an ORCID
- Complete Research Integrity Training
- Research Data Management Plan (see Library RDM guide)
- Discuss internship opportunities with your supervisor

## Milestone 2 — Progress Review

PhD: 18 months FTE | MPhil: 12 months

*Demonstrate research progress*

- Sample of written work (3,000 words)
- Oral presentation with Q&A
- Progress update and mobility plan (e.g., conferences, field trips)
- Completion and Dissemination Plan
- Co-authoring and authorship agreements

*Due within 18 months FTE. Must be submitted before candidacy can progress.*

## Milestone 3 — Pre-Submission Readiness

PhD: 39 months FTE | MPhil: 22 months

*Confirm readiness for thesis submission*

- Pre-submission presentation of thesis work
- Examiner nomination
- Review and finalise authorship agreements
- Address end-of-project attributions explicitly
- Discuss any outstanding end-of-project matters with supervisors

*Due 9 months prior to intended submission.*



# *How Milestones are Assessed*

- Candidate submits Milestone Materials
- School arranges oral presentation
- Two independent reviewers assess the submission
- Thesis Chair provides a recommendation
- DGR determines the final outcome

## Milestone Outcomes:

- Approved
- Approved with Conditions
- Amend and Resubmit
- Failed

# Why Milestones Matter

Milestones are designed to support success, not just assess progress.

## Milestones help:

- Confirm research quality and feasibility
- Monitor candidate progression
- Identify support needs early
- Provide independent feedback
- Ensure timely completion of candidature

## Important

- Milestones must be completed by the due date.
- Students who fail to meet milestone requirements may be placed on **Conditional Status**.
- Continued unsatisfactory progress can lead to **Termination of Enrolment**.



# When Things Don't Go to Plan

**Knowing who to contact — and when — makes all the difference.**

Challenges during your candidature are normal. What matters is that you seek support early. Here's a clear guide to help you find the right person at the right time.

## Contact Your Supervisor

- Research direction or methodology questions
- Publications and authorship
- Feedback on written work
- Day-to-day research progress

## Contact Your Thesis Chair

- When independent advice is needed
- Concerns about supervision or the supervisory relationship
- Procedural fairness questions at milestones

## Contact the GRS

- Scholarships and Research Support Funds
- Leave of absence requests
- Milestone and examination queries
- Policy and compliance questions
- Changes to enrolment

 Early communication leads to better outcomes. Don't wait until a problem is serious — your support network is here to help.

## Thesis Submission, Examination and Viva

From submission to external review, viva, final outcome, and degree completion — here is an overview of the examination process.



### Things to know

- A viva is required for all PhD candidates from 1 January 2026 and all MPhil candidates from 1 January 2027.
- Your thesis will be reviewed by two independent external examiners.
- The Thesis Chair independently oversees and chairs the viva.
- The viva provides an opportunity to discuss, explain and showcase your research.
- Following examination and the viva, outcomes may include pass, revisions or other outcomes in accordance with University procedures.

### Your Role

Work with your supervisory team to prepare for examination, understand the viva format, and ensure you are familiar with the required standards and expectations before submitting your thesis.



## Changes to Enrolment

Circumstances change during a long research degree.

Curtin has clear processes to support you in making adjustments to your enrolment when needed.

### Thesis Title

You can request a change to your thesis title with approval from your supervisor and DGR, submitted via the GRS forms page.

### Leave of Absence

A formal break from your enrolment may be available for pressing or unforeseen circumstances. Contact the GRS to discuss your options before submitting a request.

### Enrolment Type

A request to change from full-time to part-time (or vice versa) can be submitted via the GRS forms page, subject to approval.

### Thesis Committee

Any changes to your supervisory team must be notified by the DGR to the GRS via the forms page. Changes require appropriate approvals.

Visit the QR code to access these forms and more



## Research Support Funds

Curtin provides financial grants to help doctoral candidates disseminate and advance their research during candidature. These funds are designed to reduce financial barriers to research mobility and publication.

**\$2,500**

### Dissemination Grant

Supports thesis production costs, publication costs, and creative production expenses.

**\$2,500**

### Engagement Grant

Supports conference attendance, fieldwork (must be completed by Milestone 3), and general research mobility.

**\$3,500**

### Internship Incentive

Split in two tranches — first at contract execution, second at internship completion.

 MPhil students can use up to **\$1,500 across both grants combined**. All travel must be booked through the University's Travel Operations Portal (TOP).

# PhD Internships Overview

Curtin's PhD internship program connects doctoral students with industry partners to tackle real-world challenges and build careers beyond academia.



## Real-World Contribution

PhD students tackle genuine industry problems and make meaningful contributions to professional practice and innovation.



## Early Industry Collaboration

Industry's biggest challenges help shape research doctorate projects from an early stage, improving relevance and impact.



## Opening Employment Pathways

Internships create networks and employment opportunities for research students in sectors well beyond academia.

## Eligibility Criteria

- The internship must be a minimum of **three calendar months** in total.
- The internship must be **directly related** to your research area of study.
- Must include a minimum of **60 full-time equivalent days** of research and development activity.
- Must be agreed to in writing by the **student, university and industry partner** within the first 18 months of enrolment FTE.

# Building Your HDR Network

One of the most valuable investments you can make during your candidature is building genuine professional and personal connections. Your HDR network will support you through the challenges and milestones ahead.



## Peer HDR Community

Connect with fellow HDR students across your cohort and discipline. Shared experience is one of the most powerful forms of support during a research degree.



## Conferences and Fieldwork

Use your Engagement Grant to attend national and international conferences — a powerful way to gain visibility and grow your professional network.



## HDR Events and Training

Attend GRS-hosted events, faculty seminars, and professional development workshops to grow your skills and meet other researchers.



## Industry and Internship Connections

The PhD internship program provides direct pathways to industry relationships that can shape your career beyond academia.

# Table Quiz Challenge!

Get ready to put your knowledge to the test! It's time for our **HDR Essentials Quiz**. Each table will now work together to conquer a series of fun and challenging questions. Collaborate with your teammates and prepare for a fantastic round of friendly competition.

📋 Prizes are on offer for the winners — good luck!



# HDR ORIENTATION QUIZ!

Team name \_\_\_\_\_

Take your time to fill out the quiz **as a team**; answers will be read towards the end of the day's sessions.

1. Which best describes the role of the Graduate Research School (GRS) for HDR students?

- A. Provides only scholarship payments
- B. Manages admissions, scholarships, milestones, thesis examinations and training
- C. Marks coursework assessments
- D. Runs all faculty seminars

2. When should you submit a milestone form prior to its due date?

- A. On the due date
- B. 1 week prior
- C. 1 month prior
- D. 3 months prior

3. A Data Management Plan is required for which milestone?

- A. Milestone 1
- B. Milestone 2
- C. Milestone 3
- D. Thesis submission only

4. True or false: Supervisors should automatically be listed as co-authors on student publications.

TRUE FALSE

5. When is the HDR Newsletter typically released?

- A. First Monday of each month
- B. First Tuesday of each month
- C. Last Friday of each month
- D. Second Tuesday of each month

6. Milestone 1 is typically due at \_\_\_\_ FTE and focuses on \_\_\_\_.

- A. 6 months; Research Proposal
- B. 12 months; Progress Review
- C. 18 months; Thesis Draft
- D. 39 months; Ethics Approval

7. Who can I talk to if I'm having trouble with my supervisor?

- A. My Thesis Chair
- B. Graduate Research School
- C. The Guild
- D. Any of the above

8. Students have the right to be freely represented by which body?

- A. Faculty Graduate Studies Committee
- B. Curtin Student Guild
- C. Graduate Research School
- D. Academic Board

9. GRASP primarily helps HDR students with which of the following?

- A. Financial aid
- B. Higher-level research and writing skills development
- C. Visa processing
- D. Lab safety certifications

10. To qualify for the Curtin Internship incentive, a written project agreement should be in place by which time?

- A. Within the first 6 months
- B. By Milestone 1
- C. Within first 18 months (by M2 due date)
- D. After thesis submission date

11. The HDR Academic Literacy Diagnostic Assessment (HDR PELA) is a requirement of which milestone?

- A. Milestone 1
- B. Milestone 2
- C. Milestone 3
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TOTAL SCORE /11

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TOTAL SCORE /11

# Panel 1 - Thriving in Research: Support, Community & Wellbeing

**Psychology and Counselling Support – Dr Kristen Seaman**

**Student Assist, Student Guild– Andrew Cameron**

**Curtin Library – John Brown**



# Panel 2 - Building Strong Partnerships: The HDR Student–Supervisor Relationship

**Aimee-Kate Darias O'Hara**

**Professor Christine Erbe**

**Centre for Marine Science and Technology**



# Resources and Support — Need Help?

You don't have to navigate your HDR candidature alone. The Graduate Research School and a wide range of support services are here to help you every step of the way.

## Contact the GRS

Email: [ROC.GRS@curtin.edu.au](mailto:ROC.GRS@curtin.edu.au)

Phone Number: +61 8 9266 3337

- Admissions, scholarships and candidature advice
- Milestones, examination and policy guidance
- Complex or exceptional case guidance

## Personal Support

- Counselling and psychological services
- Student Assist (Student Guild)
- Safer Communities team
- Health and disability services

## Academic Support

- Curtin Library and Faculty Librarians
- GRASP workshops
- Research Data Management (RDM) guide
- Curtin Institute for Data Science

## Stay Connected

- HDR Newsletter (monthly, first Wednesday)
- Student Guild and student clubs
- HDR events calendar (UniHub)
- Your Supervisory Team, Thesis Chair, or School DGR



Successful HDR research relies on seeking early advice, ongoing development, and effective use of support services.



# Feedback

We hope today's session has been helpful.

## Questions?

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have now. We're here to help!

## Share Your Feedback

Scan the QR code to share your thoughts on today's session — your feedback helps us improve.



***Thank you***

***Make Tomorrow Better***

# Key Resources at a Glance

Everything you need to support your HDR journey — academic, administrative, and personal — is available online. Bookmark these links for easy reference.

## → Student Life & Experience

[Curtin Experience](#) | [Curtin Connect](#) | [Student OASIS](#) | [Student Guild](#) including [Student Assist](#) and [student clubs](#)

## → Research & Academic Support

[GRS Resources](#) | [GRASP workshops](#) | [Faculty Librarians](#) | [Library Research Support](#) | [Curtin Institute for Data Science](#)

## → Personal & Wellbeing Support

[Personal Support](#) (Career, Counselling, Health, Equity, Disability) | [Health, Safety & Emergency Management](#)

## → Research Ethics, Safety & Compliance

[Research Ethics and Safety](#) (includes Research Initiation Guide) | CHARM Risk Assessments

