HDR Candidature Management Project:  
Improving the first year research experience

Final Report

March, 2004
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Ruth Neumann
Clare Holland
Leah Boucher

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Executive Summary

This study was initiated by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) as one of a number of initiatives in quality improvement and more effective candidature management.

The aim of the study was to explore the first year research experience at Macquarie University and the University’s management of Higher Degree Research (HDR) education. Thus, the 2003 cohort of non-fee paying research masters and doctoral students commencing in the first semester were invited to participate in the study.

An overall participation rate of 46% of the cohort was achieved through either focus group interviews, individual interviews or email survey. Many participants commented positively on this study and the University’s interest in their studies.

The text of this report contains the analysis and findings of the research, as well as specific student suggestions.

A Draft Report was presented in February 2004 to Macquarie University’s Higher Degree Research Committee for discussion and feedback. At the March 2004 meeting, the HDRC recommended to adopt the Draft Report as the Final Report and to circulate it to Deans of Division and Postgraduate Coordinators and to distribute copies to participants in the study.

The main issues and findings are summarised in this Executive Summary and there are suggestions for institutional responses.

Overview of Findings

General Findings

1. The main reasons cited by students for undertaking a HDR at Macquarie University are:
   a. the knowledge, reputation and prestige of a particular academic or research area;
   b. successful past study at Macquarie;
   c. the availability of a scholarship or other funding to support the student.

2. The majority of students participating in the study are happy with most or all aspects of their first HDR year.

3. Students were very positive about the degree of freedom and autonomy that existed within the University to undertake research. They appreciated and did not want to lose the flexibility of current arrangements and processes.

4. Students were particularly pleased that the University had undertaken this study to provide an opportunity for their views to be heard and many inquired about future opportunities for this type of feedback.
5. In general, students are not particularly demanding of the University and appear particularly understanding of university pressures (e.g. tightness of space, scarcity of resources and high academic workload).

6. There is a clear difference in personal confidence, degree of guidance required and expectations between students with prior research experience (e.g. Honours) and for those without.

7. While in many instances students would appreciate information and guidance on their HDR from the University, students overall stressed that the responsibility for undertaking skill development and completion of the HDR was a student responsibility. There was nevertheless high praise for University / Divisional initiatives to assist in these areas.

8. The provision of coherent and consistent information on student entitlements and HDR expectations, together with a brief orientation, would cover many identified areas of student needs.

9. University-wide, the areas of greatest need seem to be:
   a. Having a sense of belonging to a research community;
   b. Effective university communication of diverse information;
   c. Transparency and consistency in university / divisional processes.

**Supervision Matters**

1. The research reputation of an individual academic and/or of a research specialisation plays a key, if not the most important, role in attracting HDR students.

2. All students, at the time of participation in the study, had a supervisor, though there were instances where the allocation had only recently occurred.

3. Where students selected their supervisor - a feature most commonly found in the Science fields – there tended to be greater satisfaction with supervision and progress.

4. There was broad variation in the degree of topic definition by mid semester 2, with students in non-science fields, especially Masters students, concerned that they may not be on track.

5. Those students with Honours or other previous research experience tended to have greater self confidence in being able to understand what lay ahead in the research process and in their ability to deal with it.

6. Most students felt that they would have done little different prior to enrolling in their HDR and those students with prior research experience in particular, felt well prepared for the research process.

7. Many students stressed the importance of an HDR peer group, which included more advanced HDR students, in helping them settle into their research and deal with issues as they occur.

8. Students on the whole were unsure whether their area had a Postgraduate Coordinator and even if they knew, some felt reluctant to approach the Postgraduate Coordinator (or other academic) where they had any queries in relation to supervision.
9. Many students expressed a wish for general guidelines on supervisor contact time and supervision responsibilities/expectations.

**Resources and Skill Support**

1. Many of the full time students participating in the study had some space allocated for their work. Students recognised that there were space pressures within the University but in general it was clear that the space available for the University’s HDR students was insufficient.

2. In instances where open planned areas, e.g. postgraduate rooms, are available to HDR students to work in, and where these spaces are also communal, (for meetings, morning tea, etc,) students appreciated the opportunity for interaction these spaces provided but also found it difficult to undertake work which required more concentration e.g. writing.

3. The provision of technical support and distribution of other resources is not always seen by students to be consistent. Students would appreciate clearer guidelines on space and resource entitlements and some consistency within and between Divisions on space allocation processes.

4. Students were highly positive on the library courses available to build computing and research skills.

5. Where it was offered, students were pleased to have a divisional orientation, however not all students made use of this opportunity.

6. In those areas where general research methods courses are required of students, the response is broadly positive. However, the effectiveness of these courses and progress on a student’s research is strongly affected by the availability of concurrent supervision.

7. Access to divisional and university resources does not always take into account the specific needs of part time students in relation to after hours and weekend access e.g. to postgraduate rooms, photocopying etc.

8. In some research fields where students require funding in addition to the $4000 student entitlement (available on a competitive basis), full or detailed costing did not appear to be undertaken on research commencement, which results in student uncertainty of fund availability as well as increasing pressure on tight completion times.

**Organisational Issues**

1. Overall, university organisational units do not have a particularly strong client service focus for HDR students.

2. Transparency in decision making did not always seem to be present to students in, for example:
   - Space and resource allocation;
   - Availability of technical support;
• Allocation of part time teaching opportunities;
• Scholarship distribution;
• Additional funding opportunities (e.g. divisional supplementation).

3. The effectiveness and consistency of information provided to students varies greatly, and is an issue, both within Divisions and between the University and the Divisions - for example scholarship allocation, funding prospects, assistance for international students, application process etc.

4. Students commented on the need for a basic information pack, the greater development of the HDR website and the availability of specific information prior to enrolment.

5. There needs to be greater recognition, particularly within Divisions, of the different types of students (full time, part time, international, staff as students) and the tailoring of support and assistance specifically to these groups.

6. The role of the Divisional Postgraduate Coordinator, where it exists, is new and developing, and is unclear to many students. This role offers a potential asset to the Division and its research climate, especially if supported by the Divisional Head, as students need a divisional contact in addition to their supervisor, especially for administrative queries.

7. Where the Postgraduate Coordinator role exists, it is not always appropriately resourced and supported.

**Institutional Responses**

1. Maintain the freedom, flexibility and autonomy in the research process that students currently strongly appreciate. *(For action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Deans of Division)*

2. Develop a stronger client service focus, particularly in recognising the distinction between undergraduate and advanced research students in terms of administrative and academic support and access to services. *(For action: HDRU)*

3. Continue to make efforts, and make a university priority, to provide more space for HDR students in an appropriate environment to conduct research. *(For action: Deans of Division)*

4. Provide students with specific pre-enrolment information which includes tips/information on how to select a supervisor. *(For action: HDRU and Deans of Division)*

5. Students should be required to provide a more detailed research proposal on application, to enable better supervisor allocation, as well as to assist students in defining their research topic within the context of tight completion times. For example, proposal guidelines could be available on a University / Division web page. *(For action: Deans of Division)*

6. In those fields where funding of research costs is needed, undertake more detailed costing prior to commencement to ensure funding sources are sufficient. *(For action: Deans of Division)*
7. Develop greater sensitivity and mechanisms for improved communication within Divisions and between Divisions and the University. *(For action: HDRU and Dean of Graduate Studies)*

8. Develop greater transparency and consistency in decision making and service provision (allocation of space, provision of technical support, grant and scholarship processes, part time teaching allocation, and provision of information). *(For action: HDRU and Deans of Division)*

9. Formalise the role of the Divisional Postgraduate Coordinator and provide adequate recognition of the workload and resourcing of the role. *(For action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research))*

10. Provide, within Divisions, more targeted support for the different types of students. *(For action: Deans of Division)*

11. Where Divisions allocate supervisors to students, develop early, confidential and more frequent follow up mechanisms to ensure the appropriateness of the allocation. *(For action: Deans of Division and Postgraduate Coordinators)*

12. Within the Divisions, monitor consistency of supervision practices. *(For action: Deans of Division and Dean of Graduate Studies)*

13. Where research methods courses are required, ensure that there is regular, concurrent supervision or make general research methods courses a pre-requisite for an HDR. *(For action: Deans of Division and HDRU)*
1. **Introduction**

This study was initiated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) within the context of improving the quality of the research environment for Higher Degree Research (HDR) students and more effective candidature management.

In 2003, a number of HDR proposals were undertaken or planned. These included a closer examination of completion rates and times, PREQ rating trends 1999-2002, and the progressive upgrading of formal induction and research training programs available to commencing students. It was decided that an exploration of the views and experiences of commencing students would be useful in planning and monitoring the effectiveness of change over subsequent years.

To this end, the 2003 cohort of research masters and PhD students commencing in the first half year were invited to participate in a focus group study to gain an insight into their early research experiences at Macquarie University and to elicit their views on areas of improvement.

The project has received input in the initial design and establishment stages from the Higher Degree Research Committee. The Committee has also provided feedback on the Draft Report.

2. **Aims and Outcomes of the Study**

The specific aim of the study was to explore the transition into postgraduate research with a view to improving the first year student experience at Macquarie University and the University’s management of higher degree research (HDR) education.

*Expected outcomes of the study were:*

1. To investigate the 2003 beginning HDR student cohort’s experiences in commencing their research degree and their satisfaction with support and guidance provided by the University, Division, Department and Supervisor.

2. To provide recommendations for the improvement of the first year research degree experience at Macquarie University.

3. To provide a baseline for the University to measure change in student experience and satisfaction in subsequent years.
3. Approach

The study included HDR students enrolled in research masters, PhD and non-fee paying professional doctorates. Thus, professional doctorate students in Linguistics were included but DBA students were not. Only students enrolled from the first half of 2003 were included – at the time of the study it was expected that students had completed at least six months of research toward their degree, thus providing an insight into the early research experiences at Macquarie University.

The Student One database listed 201 students meeting the above requirements. However, a closer look at this list revealed a number of students living overseas.

Ultimately, 187 students were sent a letter of invitation by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to participate in the study (see Appendix 7.1). The letter of invitation was also emailed to these students in order to ensure coverage. This contact was then followed up by a phone call to ascertain the students’ interest, availability and commitment to participate in the focus group study. In the process, it was discovered that a number of these students had discontinued their studies, or were in fact in later years of their research, thus bringing the total population for the study down to 178 HDR students.

Students were offered three avenues for confidential participation in this study. Firstly, they could join one of 15 focus groups conducted over a 3-week period in September – October (see Appendix 7.2). The focus groups averaged 4-7 students per group and sessions were offered in the morning, afternoon and evening. Of these 15 groups, 5 were held as division-specific groups, namely ACES, ELS, HUMS, LINP & ICS, with all other focus groups being mixed divisional in nature.

Secondly, students could choose to attend an individual interview, to suit those who preferred not to be in a group environment. Lastly, after all focus groups and interviews were concluded, an email survey was sent to 30 students who had expressed interest and/or had not turned up to sessions they had confirmed.

Our final sample of 81 students, representing 46% of the population, offers a diverse and comprehensive view of the population and their participation was spread as follows (See Chart 1):

- Focus Group = 68 participants;
- Individual Interview = 8 participants;
- Email Survey = 5 participants.

To allow for a fuller understanding of the administrative and academic processes raised by students in the sessions, we also conducted follow-up interviews with Divisional / Departmental Postgraduate Coordinators and Administrators. Three Divisions, in contrasting disciplines, with differing approaches were selected - ICS, LINP and SCMP.
The questions used for the focus groups, individual interview and the email survey were open, designed to elicit free response and discussion among students (see Appendix 7.3). The questions for each type of interview were similar but appropriately modified for the context. The questions for postgraduate coordinators/administrators were similarly designed to be open and can be found in Appendix 7.4.

The focus groups had both a facilitator and notetaker, but the individual interviews only had a facilitator. All interviews were also audiotaped.

Many participants commented positively on being given the opportunity to express their views and to listen to those of others: *I’m pleased that the VC wants to hear of our struggles* (Student E2). Some students also brought messages from their peers at other stages of their HDR, saying that they also wanted to take part in the study and expressed the view that they would like the opportunity to participate in a similar focus group study if offered again. Overall, three specific suggestions for ongoing study were made by participants:

1. Provide the 2003 cohort future opportunity to comment on how their research experiences have developed;
2. Repeat this study with the 2004 cohort;
3. Interview the discontinuing 2003 students.

### 4. Profile of Cohort and Participants

Overall, 46% of the first year cohort from Semester One, 2003 participated. The rate of participation varied across the Divisions, with six Divisions with participation rates of over
50%, and up to 75%, of their population, as displayed in Chart 2. The three remaining Divisions’ participation rates were between 29% and 43%.

The lower participation rates in both ELS and LINP can be partly attributed to the fact that a number of the students willing to participate in the study from these Divisions were unable to find a suitable session and did not respond to the opportunity to participate in the subsequent email survey. In ELS there were 5 students in this situation and in LINP there were 7 such students. Had these students participated, the result would have been a 49% participation rate for both these Divisions.

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It can be seen from Chart 2 that in each Division, other than ELS and LAW, the participation rates of full-time HDR students was higher than those of part-time students. This is perhaps rationalised by the fact that a large number of part-time students are employed full-time, have families and are time-poor, thus possibly restricting participation, although evening sessions, individual interviews and an email survey were included to offer flexibility.

Chart 4. Percentage of Divisional PhD and Masters Populations in Sample

Chart 4 shows that the majority of Divisions returned a higher than 40% participation rate for both PhD and Masters students, and in three cases there was full participation. Appendices 7.5 – 7.8 provide further details of the participation rates of various groups. It should be noted that in three of the larger Divisions – ELS, LINP, ICS – PhD and female students were relatively under-represented (with less than 30% participation).

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are discussed in four key areas, broadly reflecting the interview questions. These are:

1. Student reasons for undertaking a HDR
2. Supervision Matters
3. Resource and Skill Support
4. Organisational Issues

Where there are differences between fields of study, type of enrolment, and type of student, these are highlighted. The discussion includes student suggestions for improvement.
5.1 Why a HDR and Macquarie University

Students were firstly asked what it was that attracted them to a HDR and why they chose to study at Macquarie University. Not all participants had or gave an answer for either or both of these questions, whereas others, gave one or a number of reasons.

When asked why they chose to undertake a HDR, in order of frequency, participants stated (one or more of the following) that they:

1. enjoyed undertaking research or had an interest in a specific research topic;
2. were hoping to pursue an academic career;
3. believed that a HDR would assist their (non academic) career prospects;
4. were specifically encouraged to undertake a PhD by an academic – often their honours supervisor – and they would not otherwise have embarked on further research.

When asked why they chose Macquarie University for their HDR, participants often mentioned two or more reasons. The five most frequently mentioned reasons are:

1. the student knew the supervisor from previous study or a particular academic encouraged them to undertake their chosen area of research;
2. the student had successfully studied at Macquarie University before and wanted to stay / return;
3. the student had received a scholarship to study at Macquarie University or their funding was associated with a research project, or for those employed and studying part time, there was no HECS associated with undertaking a HDR;
4. the location of Macquarie University was convenient for the student;
5. the student had not studied here before but was attracted to undertake research here due to the prestige of the University, the particular department or a particular academic.

Other reasons participants gave for choosing to enrol at Macquarie University included:

1. there is an academically open environment/attitude at the University / Department compared with other universities;
2. the student was offered supplementary part-time work with study;
3. the student applied to a number of universities but received an offer from Macquarie University;
4. the student had either a poor or a failed HDR experience elsewhere and wanted to try again at Macquarie University;
5. the student just happened to see an advertisement for studying here or happened to come to Open Day and thought further study here was a good idea
6. the student liked Macquarie University although they may not necessarily have studied here before
7. there were resources at Macquarie University required for the research
8. the student had had an earlier negative experience here, but was going to try again because no other university was suitable for the topic.

It is important to note that many students were motivated to enrol in a HDR at Macquarie by successfully connecting with a specific academic with a prestigious reputation in a specific
research area, or else by discovering that a research centre or concentration in their field of interest exists here at Macquarie. This highlights the contribution of individual academics, as well as the importance of the development and maintenance of a rich and supportive research environment, to attract those self-driven students. The provision of financial opportunities such as scholarships, part-time work, additional funding through research grants, along with support and encouragement for those students already enrolled in undergraduate degrees at Macquarie also appear to have significant importance for students when making decisions on where to undertake a HDR.

5.2 Supervision Matters

The biggest challenge is self-motivation and gaining a solid knowledge of foundations in the field. To an extent I had no real expectations – I expected to be presented with a challenge (Student ES3).

The area of supervision covers a broad range of areas associated with student research. These range from the most obvious of student-supervisor relationship to such issues as understanding the research process, and, departmental research culture and climate. These are discussed below while specific matters relating to support provided by the University to undertake research, are discussed in the next section.

5.2.1 Selection and Allocation of Supervisor

All students participating in the study indicated they had, at least, a main supervisor, although a handful of students were without a supervisor until towards the end of Semester One.

Essentially, three main ways of getting a supervisor were raised in the interviews. The first way was with students remaining with the supervisor they had during their honours year or working with a different supervisor they had identified during their honours study.

For those students who came from other universities to study at Macquarie, there was often careful identification and selection of their supervisor based on their area of expertise, research reputation and publications. This second method of selecting a supervisor was predominantly found in the science fields. In Linguistics and Psychology, students coming from outside Macquarie tended to identify and select their research specialisation, with supervisors being allocated within that Division.

The third method of securing a supervisor was through the allocation of a supervisor by the Division or Department. This method applied particularly for students coming into a HDR from study at another university or coming in after a break from study and was identified mainly within the Humanities and Education Divisions. From this group of students, issues relating to supervisor commitment to the project, supervisor expertise and knowledge of in the field, and, compatibility of research approach, were apparent. In cases where students had not clearly defined their research topic at the time of this study, students commented on some dissatisfaction with their supervisor and considerations about wanting a change in supervisor. It should be noted that although these issues were not raised by all students, it was a common
theme emerging from the study. The issues were also raised more by students enrolled in a Masters than a PhD. It would require closer and more specific study to investigate this further.

In one area there was comment that academics listed as potential PhD supervisors, in an emerging HDR area, did not have PhD qualifications.

### 5.2.2 Student-supervisor Contact

The degree of contact that students had with their supervisor at the time of the study varied greatly, ranging from daily contact to only one or two meetings since commencement of their HDR degree.

In experimental fields particularly, students described ready access to their supervisors. In the cases of part time students and those in the Humanities, contact ranged from weekly to once a month. Several students mentioned regular, set meetings at intervals that suited them and their research. In a small number of instances, students had signed a contract with their supervisor on how they would work together, responsibilities and agreement on contact/schedules.

It is important to recognise that the amount of contact students desire with their supervisor also varies greatly. Part time students in the Humanities and Social Sciences, for example, express a desire for regular contact but not necessarily highly frequent contact. Student preferences varied, however monthly meetings were mentioned by several. Numerous students asked whether there were guidelines providing an approximation of the amount of contact time they could expect or were expected to have. A typical question, particularly in non-experimental fields, went along the lines: “If there is an expectation of, say 10 hours per semester, can I have this as two five-hour meetings if it suits me or do I have to take it as one hour a week over ten weeks?”

On the other hand, there were numerous complaints registered regarding difficulty in arranging meetings (cancellations, no response to student email requests) and with infrequency of contact.

Many students noted the high workload of their supervisor, particularly for high profile academics, and were reluctant to push for too much time.

It was principally within these contexts that students raised whether the University had guidelines on what they could/should expect in terms of contact and feedback and expressed a wish to have such guidelines outlined from the start of their HDR.

One point of confusion was where students had supervisors across different Divisions as in the case of interdisciplinary research topics. The concern here was the amount of contact a student could or should expect from a supervisor outside of the student’s Division of enrolment. The concern involves university HDR funding distribution mechanisms.
5.2.3 Supervisor Guidance

Together with the amount of contact shared with their supervisor, is the importance of the degree of guidance students received in developing their topic and planning their research, as well as in feedback on drafts and direction.

From the discussions, as with degree of supervisor contact, there was much variation between students’ experience of guidance by a supervisor. Many were happy with the guidance they were receiving and commented on: assistance and advice with refining their topic area, supervisor knowledge of the area, and helpfulness of supervisor feedback on drafts. Other students commented on how encouraging their supervisor was with suggested readings, sounding out ideas and writing early drafts, as well as offering serious consideration and feedback on all work submitted. Students also mentioned supervisors providing network and industry contact opportunities, assisting in getting papers published and attracting funding. Satisfied students indicated that their supervisor enjoyed playing a ‘mentor’ role, and would bend over backwards (Student M2) for the student.

In other cases however, students reported waiting for a month or longer to receive feedback on written drafts, no response at all to written drafts, no response to emails, having their work placed ‘at the bottom of the marking pile’, supervisor’s not “getting around to reading it on the bus, despite having the draft for more than one month”, and, incidents of demoralising and unsupportive comments. Others felt that they were unable to make use of their supervisor’s time and knowledge because their meetings were frequently changed and they were obviously not a priority.

Another relatively common issue for students who felt a lack of supervisory guidance was a feeling of uncertainty about various research process details eg. length of thesis, costing and funding opportunities, as well as the timeline/deadline expectations for their project. Some students indicated a lack of structure and direction, along with unclear expectations of the supervisory role.

A number of students expressed the feeling that their supervisors were highly constrained by time commitments, especially those who also held Head of Department positions. Consequently, students held back from asking for as much guidance as they felt they required, especially in regards to administrative questions and regulations. Students explained that they expected, and for the most part received, academic and research guidance from their supervisor, however they were reluctant to discuss administrative issues, preferring a “trial and error approach”. Most students did not expect their supervisor to know about these issues nor did they see it as their role and many felt that they would not use supervision time on such matters. If administrative guidance was needed on matters such as applying for funding and they were unable to get this from either their peer group or a postgraduate coordinator or administrator, only a few felt that they would ‘trouble’ their supervisor with this.

This time pressure on supervisors led some students to select an associate supervisor who could be approached more easily than a very busy primary supervisor, especially with regards to administrative and research process queries. On the whole, students were unclear about the associate supervisor role and in most cases students were not using their associate supervisor. There were also students who did not feel that their associate supervisor would be
able to carry their supervision in the event of the departure of their main supervisor, e.g. on study leave.

A number of participants were undertaking their HDR while their supervisor was on study leave. Of these, some were communicating successfully and fairly regularly with their supervisor while overseas. However, not all students in such situations felt comfortable at the prospect of being without their main supervisor for a longer period of time. In such instances, assurance – such as in the form of written guidelines on processes, responsibilities and expectations – that supervision with a suitable person with expertise in the area of research was available and would continue uninterrupted, was requested by most students.

Students who were disappointed with the degree of guidance they were receiving were more likely to comment on the need for university guidelines on what they could reasonably expect from a supervisor. It is generally obvious that many first year students expect or require a proactive attitude and interaction standards to come from their supervisor, to have them set the pace and expectations for the student.

5.2.4 Knowing What’s Required: understanding the research process

In relation to knowing what is required of a Masters or PhD thesis and understanding, in broad terms, the overall research process, there appeared a clear difference between Masters and PhD students and also between those who had undertaken previous research, such as an Honours degree. Those without this previous experience were far more hesitant and vague and were more likely to express a wish for written guidelines from the University.

There were many positive comments from those students in Divisions or departments where there was some form of orientation in the early stages of their HDR and where thesis requirements and expectations were discussed. Similarly, students who were required or able to attend a regular series of seminars maintained that these seminars provided structure, direction, clarified expectations and requirements and offered a chance for students to interact and share information.

Within this context too, it is important to note the importance many students attributed to having contact with a peer group comprising students at different stages of their HDR. This was especially the case in the Science, Linguistics and Psychology fields. Students who did not have a physical space close to other students did not seem to benefit as much from this interaction. For students in other fields and for part time students, the regular seminar series or orientation fulfilled a similar role.

Finally, the issue of writing – how soon, how much, by when – was raised. A few students were surprised that others had already begun writing. There was variation ranging from those with a chapter or more written to those who had not “put pen to paper”. Particularly those who had prior research experience commented on the need for greater encouragement for students to begin writing early.


5.2.5 Trust

The important area of trust between student and supervisor was raised by a handful of students, in the main, based on personal experience. Three specific issues were raised. First was the importance of selecting a supervisor who will not take the student’s work and present it as their own. For one student this had occurred in prior Masters research at another university and for their PhD the student had carefully selected a supervisor with a reputation for good supervision here at Macquarie.

In a similar context, another student raised trust in relation to Intellectual Property already being developed for the thesis research and which may, at a later stage, be marketable by the student. This issue relates not only to scientific fields but also areas such as survey instruments, clinical tests and measurement. The concern raised was that the supervisor may claim it as their own and that there should be agreement between student and supervisor at the commencement of the HDR on student ownership of IP. In one instance a student had been successful in changing supervisors to one who would respect student IP and where there could be trust in the supervisory relationship. In other instances, students were unclear about IP issues and responsibilities in the case of industry supported research and heavily relied on the honesty and knowledge of their supervisor.

The second aspect was being able to trust your supervisor not to pass on early thinking in the development of a theoretical framework or a new interpretation of ideas to other students or researchers. The concern here was that the student had developed a mistrust of their supervisor because they felt that this was happening, while at the same time realising that proving this would be very difficult for a student on their own to do. According to this student, the mistrust was shared by other students within their area.

The third area of trust relates to university staff undertaking a HDR in their own Department / Division. The issue of trust raised here related to a junior (i.e. without PhD) staff member feeling that other staff in the Department with PhDs would use the developing research for their own research and career advancement purposes before the student had a chance to complete and gain their PhD. In one case, a staff member undertaking a HDR and their supervisor from this University agreed to sign a contract which included confidentiality about the student and the thesis.

5.2.6 Research Climate

Students expressed varying degrees of inclusion and support relating to a sense of belonging to a positive, vibrant research culture within the University and the Divisions/Departments. Strong contributors to a positive research climate raised by students include:

- Provision of a Postgraduate room within the Department:
  - Offering desk space, computers etc for postgraduate students,
  - Peer mentoring and information sharing with more experienced students,
  - Close, day-to-day interaction with academics,
  - Intimate acquaintance with the departmental climate;
- A thorough and timely orientation and introduction process;
- Effective internal communication systems;
- A departmental research seminar program, with staff and HDR students presenting and discussing research in progress;
- Promotion of a friendly, student-focussed departmental environment;
- Shared postgraduate/staff facilities; and
- Annual student conferences, which include academic staff.

It should be noted that part-time and international students were more likely to report a lack of a ‘sense of belonging’ and more isolation than full-time, local students. Suggestions to compensate and increase the students’ sense of an inclusive, supportive research climate include:

- Strong communication strategies:
  - Consistent and comprehensive email communications;
  - Organised, occasional face-to-face meetings, both formal and social, with academics and students outside the supervisor relationship;
  - Proactive and useful information sharing;

- Accessibility issues:
  - Greater access to buildings and amenities outside work hours;
  - Greater flexibility for supervisor contact.

Departmental involvement is seen by HDR students as vital to the provision of a nurturing and supportive environment for the facilitation of more timely completions. This could include targeted student support, encouragement and assistance for students in relation to publication of research, conference attendance and presentations, discussions on research in progress, organization of Departmental presentations and meetings targeting HDR students.

It was mentioned that a sense of the culture must come from the top: *If the Head of Department is seen as interested and supportive of the postgraduate students, then this will serve to boost the research culture* (Student M1).

**Additional student suggestions on supervision matters.**

The student suggestions below are in addition to the supervision discussion in the above sections. They are provided to indicate the range of student needs for information and guidance on understanding the research process and scope. They do not necessarily reflect a majority view and are listed to assist the University in responding to better meet student needs.

1. Provide information / tips on how to select a supervisor prior to application or enrolment (e.g. during Honours, on website);
2. Have university guidelines of writing targets throughout candidature;
3. Let students know that they can start their research before formal enrolment;
4. Offer coursework and supervision in student’s local (residential or work) area, to assist part timers and off campus students;
5. Provide guidelines on minimum supervisor time commitment;
6. Provide guidelines on timely email response e.g. within 72 hours;
7. Organise student/supervisor meetings on a weekend for a half day once a semester instead of throughout semester;
8. Communicate government completion times more clearly. Student recommendation: Students should be able to negotiate completion times with the University / supervisor;
9. Provide remuneration or recognition where external students are required to have an external supervisor;
10. Offer refresher courses for supervisors on funding opportunities, administration etc;
11. Provide advice to applicants on what they could/should do in order to understand the system (e.g. check website, forms etc.) in the three month time lag between applying and beginning the research.

5.3 Resource and Skill Support

Resources that students may require in the course of HDR vary quite widely. These are discussed below in relation to physical and technical support needs, skill development needs, the library and the vexed issue of funding.

5.3.1 Availability of Physical and Technical Resources

Students have need of particular physical resources in undertaking their research. These include, amongst others, suitable desk space, computing equipment, secure storage facilities for data and the availability of photocopying. There is also the issue of technical support for computers and other necessary research equipment that is held within the University. On the important issue of desk space, the situation is fairly varied. Some students have a desk which is theirs, either in a small shared office or in a larger postgraduate student room.

In other instances, Divisions have available for students, a postgraduate research student room with desk space available on a daily first come first served basis. The latter is less satisfactory for full time students, since they have nowhere they can securely store material or work in a longer term, uninterrupted way. Both students and postgraduate coordinators commented on the shortage of space for HDR students and the continuing difficulty that the University had in being able to provide sufficient work space. In one instance, for example, a postgraduate coordinator explained that they had eight desk spaces available for about 100 HDR students.

There were mixed responses to open plan student work areas for undertaking research. On the one hand, students felt that they had the benefit of being in a peer group environment where it was easy to share information and discuss research matters. On the other hand, the surrounding noise and activity level was seen to strongly impede concentration and research development. Many students in these areas explained that they would undertake their writing at home.

Equally important to desk space is related storage space where students can leave their papers and securely store their research data. Here too, the situation varies greatly across Divisions and also across quite specific research areas within Divisions, especially if data is confidential or sensitive.

Associated with the availability of desk space is the initial space allocation process. Many students either did not know how to obtain desk space or felt that the allocation process was
far from transparent and may in fact relate to the personal power and prestige of a particular academic within the Department. There is a strong wish for clear guidelines within each Division describing what students could expect, how to apply and the allocation process. Among the part time students, most did not have, and did not wish to have, permanent desk space since it was often more convenient for them to work from their home. What was needed however was ready access for part time students over the weekend to existing departmental postgraduate research student rooms and other facilities. There was concern over restricted weekend access, with part time HDR students often not having an after-hours pass to buildings.

The availability and quality of computers was another issue raised. Most important was the perceived lack of transparency in the allocation process. The provision of technical support was also raised by many students, with the situation varying strongly between and within Divisions. Where there were difficulties, they seemed to relate to inconsistencies within Divisions and Departments as to the available allocation of technical support. There were also comments by some students who had personally bought their own notebook computers for the research, that because the computer was not purchased by the University, it would not be technically supported by the University, even though it was used for their HDR work. In many cases, where these issues were raised, students were unclear about who to ask and where to go for support and in some instances, described how their research progress was hampered due to the lack of technical computing support.

A number of students specifically commented on how pleased they were and how included they felt, when, on arrival, their department provided them with photocopy cards, an email address, stationery, etc. By contrast, other students were surprised to learn that such things existed or happened. Knowledge of software licenses also varied. The issue for students is broad consistency in basic resource provision, as well as information on resource entitlement and allocation, names of available support people and administrative problem solvers within their Department/Division.

5.3.2 Skill Development

This section discusses skill development opportunity for students in relation to departmental seminars, orientation programs and other university skills support. Library courses are discussed separately in the next section.

As already discussed in 5.2.6, in those Divisions where students were offered orientation programs, or where there were ongoing HDR student seminars, students felt adequately supported in their early skill development needs. One postgraduate coordinator commented that not many students attended the Division’s orientation, an event that took much planning and preparation.

In some Divisions, certain students were expected to undertake research methods courses. These were generally appreciated by students. However, one negative aspect was that several students undertaking research methods courses were unable to meet as regularly as desired with their allocated supervisor because the supervisor was not expecting contact until the student had completed the research methods courses. Here too, there were students who were experiencing difficulties in honing and defining their topic and were not receiving the amount of support from their supervisor that they believed they needed.
When providing courses with online components, a key factor for success is that any interaction required is relevant and meaningful to the research process. Artificial impositions of interaction e.g. Compulsory chat sessions, were seen by students as too time consuming with little benefit in the development of their research.

Students with prior research experience, such as an Honours degree, generally felt very confident about their research skills. These students strongly maintained that generic research methods courses, at a commencement stage of what was usually a PhD, were not needed by them and any research skill development needs that they had would be far more specific and would require either a tailor made course or the ability to fund particular research support such as analysis using specific techniques that may not be available at Macquarie University.

Overall, students were happy with the level of skills support provided by the University and within their Division and no major areas or gaps were identified during the study.

5.3.3 Skill Development and Resources Through the Library

Many participants had already undertaken courses offered by the library and only a handful of students were unaware of these courses. There was strong support for these courses and students felt that they met the needs and requirements that they had. Mentioned in particular were Endnote, Filemaker Pro, thesis formatting and Advanced Word. Most student suggestions related to more frequent offering of these courses, and especially part timers, felt that it would be helpful if these courses were also offered out of workday hours.

In relation to library resources, the student experience was more varied. Many were satisfied with the available material and did not expect the library to have all relevant or obscure material. Others felt the library was not adequately stocked for their specialisation and were relying on other university libraries. Students were happy with the document supply service; although some felt that the time waiting – sometimes up to three weeks – delayed progress on their research. Many students felt the online resources were good and allowed off campus access which was convenient for part time students.

Feedback on library staff was very positive, with students commenting that the staff were friendly, approachable, highly skilled and extremely helpful. There could be greater communication of the role of the outreach librarian for each Division. In those Divisions where the outreach librarian has taken a more proactive role, students noted them as a valuable resource.

Space within the library was a key issue. Students felt there were often no desks available and that the library was not always quiet enough to work in, especially when some of the documents are limited to certain areas of the library. There is a perceived lack of transparency and clarity about the allocation process of keys to the library postgraduate room. Many students were unable to obtain keys and did not always know whom to ask. Other students were told all the keys had been allocated although no one ever seems to use the room.

Additional specific student suggestions included:
1. Have the option to have document delivery, on a cost recovery basis, available for all students, as is available for students living outside the 50km radius. This would be of
most benefit to part time students who are unable to frequently visit campus but who do not qualify as a distance education student;
2. Increase the quota of books HDR students can borrow;
3. Increase the borrowing period from 8 to 12 weeks;
4. Provide better access to the library after hours and on the weekends, including Net Request and speciality areas;
5. Provide greater access to journals and to entire texts online, as currently only partial access exists.
6. Send email reminders about books due or library fines.
7. Provide information on costs involved in specific library services, e.g. fees for overseas document supply.

5.3.4 Financial Support

The importance of adequate financial support was highlighted in 5.1 as among the key reasons that students had elected to study at Macquarie. The importance of scholarships for full time students is a major issue, as is the availability of part time teaching or research assistant work.

Within some Divisions, there are mechanisms for distributing additional funding to students, at times prioritised by category of student. The amounts vary across the Divisions, as do the types of funding. There are, for example, supplementary scholarships available to students, ranging from $1000-$6000, depending on the Division and these are usually available for students rated on their previous academic achievements. Students may also access annual funding to assist with research costs. These funds are small, in the order of $500, but one postgraduate coordinator, when discussing the different types of additional funding available to students in the Division, was dismayed that many students did not make use of this money. There were students however who vaguely knew about the prospect of additional divisional funding support, but said that they did not know where to find out about it and who to ask.

This divisional funding is additional to the $4000 research support money offered to students by the University, on a competitive basis, once during their candidature. Many students in the study were aware of this funding and were planning on how they could best use this money. A reasonable number of students however, only learnt about this funding source through participation in this study. Other students, nearly always part time in non-science fields and in full time employment, explained that support from the University was appreciated but that they were prepared to fund their own research costs, preferring to leave scarce resources for younger, full time students who had greater need of financial assistance.

The importance of costing a research project prior to commencement arose in some research fields. A few students commented that, based on initial discussions with their supervisor, they had thought their research costs would be covered. They have since learnt that only part of the costs are to be met by the Division and have found that they are also expected to find and apply for external grants to meet the research and analysis costs. Such students commented on their lack of knowledge and experience in grant writing with some finding it quite daunting. In those instances where students were applying for grants they pointed out how time consuming it was, taking away time from their actual research. Further, even if successful, the actual funding would not come through until half way or more into their candidature, putting pressure on meeting the three year completion deadline. On the positive side, students knew that the experience of applying for grants would stand them in good stead.
and that the Research Office website on grant opportunities was very helpful. On probing with these students on how much would be needed to meet these additional research costs, the response was that $5-10,000 would be sufficient.

For staff of the University undertaking a HDR here, there are clear tensions and perceived ambiguities in relation to staff university research grant entitlements for their HDR research.

University administrative requirements to document the spending of university money was found to be onerous and those few students who had already been through the process discussed the frustrations of conflicting information and advice within the Division and between the University and the Division.

Within the funding context, a number of students also raised the issue of transparency in decision making in relation to funding of grants and the University’s method of awarding internal and government scholarships. There were a few students – and their supervisors – who queried the scholarship allocation process and a perceived lack of transparency.

A final issue concerns the (perceived) longer term stability of funding of (new) research centres and concentrations within the University. It is particularly an issue raised by students in the context of availability of equipment and technical support.

5.4 Organisational Issues

*It is actually quite an inspiring academic environment in the Department. That is not really the issue. It is all the non academic stuff which is frustrating.* (Student 05)

5.4.1 University

The biggest organisational issues for students are: a) knowing who to ask and b) knowing what it is that they do not know. While there were certainly students who had described their administrative experiences as trouble free and smooth, the strong message from the study is the need to develop a stronger client service focus in all parts of the University directed toward HDR students. Students see the administrative areas as largely bureaucratic with poor communication flows both within the Divisions and between the Divisions and other University units.

Most HDR student experiences at this stage related to applications, enrolments and scholarships. Many comments indicated that students find that university forms can be confusing and that various processes assume knowledge of the process which students do not have, resulting in frustrations. For example, students do not necessarily understand the distinction between scholarship, stipend and HECS-exemption. Not all part time students were aware that enrolling in a HDR meant that they would not accumulate a HECS debt. Given the importance of funding issues in attracting students to HDR study noted earlier, clear information and communication of such ‘basics’ would be helpful.

The issue of providing accurate and consistent information to students is a key area, with the interface between Division and University appearing as the weak link. Based on student suggestions an information pack, improved website information and clearly identified and
available contact people within the University and their Division who ‘specialise’ on HDR student matters would solve most problems. This information should be available prior to enrolment. Most students maintained that a brief orientation on commencement would be helpful, though timing for part time students is clearly an issue.

Of an academic nature, are the organisational barriers that students perceive in undertaking interdisciplinary research and a perceived lack of a supportive university interdisciplinary research climate. This is not to deny that there may be pockets of interdisciplinary research, but students commented on limited research communication across Divisions and perceived factionalism across and between Divisions.

Below are brief summaries on experiences with key university administration units dealing with HDR students. The library has been discussed separately in 5.3.3 above. More detailed information, where it exists, will be provided to each area separately and will maintain participant confidentiality.

Higher Degree Research Unit (HDRU)
Of all the university offices, outside of the Divisions and the Library, the HDRU is the area with which students have had most contact. Student comments reflected general satisfaction, however there was still a need to develop a stronger client focus for enquiries, scholarship information and application assistance. As would be expected, enrolment process experiences varied. Most students found the process smooth, but where it went wrong for individuals there was the inevitable frustration. See also specific student suggestions below.

Research Office (RO)
At this early stage of candidature, few students have had cause to interact with the Research Office. Thus few, and mostly neutral, comments were expressed. There were some requests to obtain greater support in documenting and justifying student grant expenditure to meet university requirements and also comments on the need for more assistance with ethics applications. The helpfulness of the grant website has already been mentioned in 5.3.4 on funding issues.

International Office (IO)
Participants offered many critical comments about their experiences with the International Office. Comments related to communication processes, disruptive experiences at the application stage and a poor client service focus. Repercussions here affected visas, personal finances, family arrangements, travel and ability to commence HDR study on time. Specific matters will be referred to the HDRU to address given the full transfer of the application process from IO to HDRU during 2003.

Additional specific student suggestions
The student suggestions on information and orientation below are in addition to the findings in the above sections. They are provided to indicate the range of student needs for information and guidance on understanding the research process and scope. They do not necessarily reflect a majority view and are listed to assist the University in responding to better meet student needs.
Information needs

1. Alert and avail students to the mentoring role of postdocs and other postgraduate students;
2. Provide clearer information about intellectual property and copyright;
3. Macquarie University should implement wireless access to their local area network – this would be a particular benefit for part time students bringing their own notebook computer on campus;
4. Keep Student One details up-to-date;
5. Put coursework lectures and PowerPoint slides online as a minimum standard;
6. Provide information on finding/choosing/changing supervisor;
7. Alert students to use of department noticeboards as a method of communication;
8. Provide more information about postgraduate study at undergraduate, especially Honours, level;
9. Provide more information on the assessment and evaluation procedure for research degrees;
10. Provide information about affordable and convenient accommodation in Sydney for external students;
11. Change the University travel grant process, as students are currently not able to receive money for the airfare until a receipt is provided.

Orientation program

1. If an orientation is introduced, offer it to this cohort to attend even though they will be in their second year;
2. Make orientation program attendance compulsory;
3. Orientation should be early on i.e. not several months down the track;
4. An orientation program should be held one month after semester starts;
5. Orientation should also be such that it allows the cohort to meet and network;
6. Orientation should be at a divisional level but then should split into departmental groups to ‘explain the finer details’;
7. Orientation needs to be offered several times a year for those students commencing later in the year.

5.4.2 Division

The Division-University interface is a major management issue. The need for consistent and accurate information provision to students and clear communication flow has been highlighted as has the student perception of lack of transparency in decision making.

Where there are tensions and fragmentation within Divisions there tended to be greater student uncertainty about information and need for assistance. It was easier for students to ‘fall between the cracks’ and for feelings of student isolation to occur. The key question for students is: “who has responsibility for HDR students in the Division and who knows how things should work?”

During the course of the focus group interviews, the issue of divisional or departmental support emerged as a key issue. Student responses revealed often very differing experiences
at the divisional level and in many cases, uncertainty existed about whether or not there was in fact (formal) support for them in the Division / Department.

As a result it was decided to select three contrasting Divisions (ICS, SCMP, LINP), each with large enrolments of HDR students and first year intakes. The intention was to explore divisional and departmental arrangements for HDR students. It should be noted that the role of Postgraduate (HDR) Coordinator is not a formally designated university position, rather one adopted by some Divisions and/or Departments. Thus, there may be varying approaches to the role, its support arrangements and the time that could be devoted to the role.

**Postgraduate Coordinators**

In all three Divisions this role is new, established in the last 1-2 years, with the incumbent being the first to take on the role. The Postgraduate Administrator interviewed had undertaken the role for several years and was very experienced with research student needs and issues.

In two of the Divisions there was a divisional Postgraduate Coordinator with departmental coordinators to assist with department specific organisational and management matters. In the other Division there were only departmental coordinators. The key organisational / management issue is the degree of cohesion within the Division and its departments in the coordination and management of HDR students and hence the consistency of approach to, and opportunity for, students. In general, organisational and cultural fragmentation within the Division existed, explaining in part the inconsistency of student experience expressed during the focus groups.

Overall the postgraduate coordinator role comprised:

- Application screening
- Supervisor identification and allocation
- Progress monitoring
- Organization of divisional orientation, HDR seminars, meetings etc
- Information coordination (including website development)
- Development of divisional / departmental HDR policy
- Divisional / departmental research and research student meetings
- Responsibility for divisional resource allocation (rooms, computers, additional financial support etc)
- General trouble shooter.

Discussion revealed high workloads, especially in the initial two years of establishing a new role, in particular within the context of tighter overall university funding and university HDR completion rates. Two of the Postgraduate Coordinators mentioned an awareness of competition with other universities and ‘getting the edge’ in the student market.

Very clear from the discussion with Postgraduate Coordinators is that they do not have a great deal of individual personal contact with students. Although the handling of supervision issues is one of their roles, they apparently had few reports of dissatisfaction with, or uncertainty about, supervision from students. Postgraduate Coordinators felt that if there were supervision issues, then students would come to them. This contrasts with the view expressed by students that they would not feel comfortable in discussing any supervision issues.
queries they had with another academic in the Department / Division. Further, most students were unsure whether there was a Postgraduate Coordinator in their Division / Department or whether there was anyone with specific responsibility for HDR students.

From this study there is clearly an important role for postgraduate coordinators in assisting HDR students in their Division and strengthening the research climate. Three main issues emerge for the success of the role and broader supervision support of HDR students:

1. Formal and appropriate recognition of the Postgraduate Coordinator role;
2. Appropriate recognition of the workload involved;
3. Adequate resourcing of the role, in particular dedicated administrative support with knowledge of HDR matters.

6. Concluding Comments

This study revealed that while the majority of participants are satisfied overall with their first year research experience, there is wide variation in different aspects of their experience across and within Divisions.

On the whole, students are undemanding of the University and understanding of university and individual academic pressures. This, however, should not lead to complacency in institutional quality assurance efforts.

The key areas to target improvement are in:

1. Providing consistent and relevant information
2. Improving communication channels
3. Developing a HDR client service focus
4. More conscious targeting of support for different types of students.

In each of these areas, systemic changes, without losing the flexibility and autonomy students appreciate, can lead to significant improvements in the first year HDR experience.
7. Appendices

7.1. Letter of Invitation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

Dear

During 2003 Macquarie University, through the Higher Degree Research Committee and (Administrative) Unit, has been looking to improve the quality of the research environment for Higher Degree (Postgraduate) Research students. In particular we are progressively upgrading formal induction and research training programs available to commencing research students in all Divisions of the University.

To better understand experiences and views of commencing research students, we will be undertaking over the next two months a number of focus group interviews with students enrolled for the first time at Macquarie University in 2003 in either a research masters or a doctorate. This program of interviews has the support of the Macquarie University Postgraduate Representative Association (MUPRA).

I am writing to invite you to participate in one of these focus groups. Each focus group will take an hour.

The University is interested in your views on all aspects of your research experience at Macquarie during your first year. I would like to encourage you to take part and to feel free to be open with your views and suggestions. No comments that you make will be attributed to you as an individual.

The focus groups will be conducted by Ruth Neumann, Higher Education Policy Officer of the University, and will be held in the Library. A series of focus group sessions has been planned for late September to mid October. The groups will be small (6-8 students) and the sessions will be held during both day and evening for maximum convenience.

If you are interested in taking part in a focus group, please reply to Ruth. She will arrange a time and obtain your agreement to participate. Should you prefer to have an individual interview then please let Ruth know. She can be contacted on 02 9850 6403 or by emailing highered@vc.mq.edu.au

All participants in the focus groups will receive a report of the findings, as will the President of MUPRA.

I hope that you will be able to make time in your busy study schedule to participate and help to improve the research environment for postgraduate students at Macquarie University.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Piper
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
### 7.2. Focus Group and Interview Session Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Morning Session</th>
<th>Afternoon Session</th>
<th>Evening Session</th>
<th>FAC/NT</th>
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<td>Mon</td>
<td>22.9.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>2-3pm INTERVIEW</td>
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<td>Wed</td>
<td>15.10.03</td>
<td>11-12pm MIXED</td>
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7.3. Focus Group Interview Schedule

HDR Candidature Management Project: Improving the first year research experience

Focus Group Questions

AIM: To explore the transition into postgraduate research with a view to improving the first year student experience and the University’s management of HDR education.

1. You have all started on a PhD/Masters this year, what attracted you to enrol in a research degree at Macquarie University?

2. You have been involved in your research for around 6 months so far. What has been the best part for you so far? What’s worked really well for you?

3. In the past few months, since you started your research, what has gone differently from your expectations? What challenges have you come up against?

4. Looking back, what would you do differently before enrolling in a PhD/Masters? Do you think that you could have been better prepared? How?

5. What do you think the major hurdles will be for you for the next 2 or so years? And how can the University help?

6. Well, from our discussion today, what wouldn’t you like to see changed? And what needs to be changed?

Areas to probe:
- Supervisor selection
- Topic development
- Departmental / Divisional support and climate
- University support and climate (including administrative support RO / HDRU)
- Infrastructure
- Skill gaps
- Understanding what’s required of a research degree
7.4. Postgraduate Coordinator Interview Schedule

HDR Candidature Management Project: Improving the first year research experience

Questions to Divisional / Departmental Postgraduate Coordinators

Questions:

1. Firstly can you outline your role within the Division/Department?
   a. What issues do you have to deal with?
   b. Personal workload

2. How would you describe the Divisional/Departmental interface?

3. How would you describe the Divisional/University interface?

4. Are there any particular issues in relation to those 1st year enrolled HDR that appear different to those of students in later years?

5. What works particularly well? What doesn’t work so well and how could it be improved?

Areas to probe:

- Orientation program
- Peer support
- Fortnightly seminars
- Enrolment process
- Resources
- $ for research costs
7.5. Profile of PhD Students in Cohort

The lower participation rate of PhD students in ELS and LINP reflects an overall lower participation rate in these Divisions.

Participation by PhD students in GSM and ICS was lower than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.

Participation by PhD students in SCMP was higher than the overall participation rate for the Division.
7.6. Profile of Masters Students in Cohort

100% of Masters students in EFS and GSM participated in the study.

Participation by Masters students in SCMP was lower than the overall participation rate for the Division.

Participation by Masters students in ELS and ICS was higher than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.
7.6. Profile of Full Time Students in Cohort

100% of full-time students in EFS participated in the study.

Participation by full-time students in GSM and ICS was higher than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.
**7.7. Profile of Part Time Students in Cohort**

**Part-time Students in Sample by Division**

**Part-time Students in Population by Division**

**Comparison of Part-time Population with Sample Group (Actual Numbers)**

100% of part-time students in Law participated in the study.

Participation by part-time students in most Divisions was lower than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.
7.8. Profile of Gender Participation

Sample Participants as Percentage of Population

Males in Sample and Population by Division (Actual Numbers)

100% of male students in EFS participated in the study.

Participation by male students in Law and LINP was lower than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.

Participation by male students in GSM and SCMP was higher than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.
100% of female students in Law participated in the study.

Participation by female students in EFS, SCMP and ELS was lower than the overall participation rate for those Divisions.

Participation by female students in ACES was higher than the overall participation rate for the Division.