

**Research Higher Degrees**  
**The School of Physiotherapy**  
**The University of Sydney**



***Applications for  
research higher degree positions***

**Introduction**

This guide contains information about applications for positions in the School of Physiotherapy's three research higher degree programs (the PhD, MAppSc and HScD programs).

**General information**

Detailed information about the school's research programs can be found at:

1. <http://ptwww.fhs.usyd.edu.au/Homesite/> (look under Research, Research Resources) for research programs and supervisors in the school
2. <http://ptwww.fhs.usyd.edu.au/Units/postgraduate.htm> for information on the research masters and PhD programs
3. <http://www2.fhs.usyd.edu.au/hscd/> for information on the HScD program (NB. Enrolments and enquiries for this course are handled by Dr Barbara Adamson, [b.adamson@fhs.usyd.edu.au](mailto:b.adamson@fhs.usyd.edu.au))
4. [http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/organisation/pub/international\\_prospectus.shtml](http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/organisation/pub/international_prospectus.shtml) and <http://www.fhs.usyd.edu.au/prospective/index.htm> for information (including a prospectus about the university and the faculty) for students who are considering whether or not to study at the University of Sydney. These pages also contain useful information about availability of accommodation, fees etc.

Prior to submitting a formal application, prospective students need to find a suitable supervisor and enter into an agreement about supervision. The Postgraduate Research Coordinator (Professor Joy Higgs [j.higgs@fhs.usyd.edu.au](mailto:j.higgs@fhs.usyd.edu.au), phone 02 9351 9070) can assist in this task. It is helpful if prospective students provide a half page description of their ideas on research topics, why they are interested in researching that topic, and ideas about research design.

Application forms are located at <http://www.fhs.usyd.edu.au/study/forms/pgresappl.pdf>

UNLESS YOU ARE AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OR A TEMPORARY RESIDENT IN AUSTRALIA, LODGE YOUR APPLICATION AT  
Student Administration (Cumberland Campus)  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
The University of Sydney  
PO Box 170  
LIDCOMBE NSW 1825  
Phone: +61 2 9351 9351 email: [pginfo@fhs.usyd.edu.au](mailto:pginfo@fhs.usyd.edu.au)

IF YOU ARE AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OR A TEMPORARY RESIDENT IN AUSTRALIA, LODGE YOUR APPLICATION AT  
International Office  
The University of Sydney  
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA  
Phone: +61 2 9351 4079, email: [info@io.usyd.edu.au](mailto:info@io.usyd.edu.au)

CLOSING DATES:  
March 2005 intake: 31 October 2004  
August 2005 intake: 31 May 2005

## **Applications**

Formal applications for positions in Master and PhD programs are assessed by the Postgraduate Research Coordinator who makes recommendations to the Head of School and the Associate Dean (Graduate Research). This involves consideration of several issues:

### **1. Eligibility**

Criteria for admission are as follows.

The Faculty may, on the recommendation of the Head of School concerned, admit to candidature for a degree of **Master** within the Faculty an applicant

- who has completed courses appropriate to the area of study in which the applicant seeks to proceed, provided that the applicant's work is of sufficient merit, or who has submitted evidence of general and professional qualifications to satisfy the Faculty that the applicant possesses the educational preparation and capacity to pursue graduate studies. Appropriate courses are those deemed equivalent to the Bachelor degree in Physiotherapy from Cumberland College of Health Sciences or The University of Sydney.
- who, in addition, meets any other requirements for admission to a particular program that has been prescribed by Faculty.

For the **PhD** program, the minimum admission requirement is a master's degree, or a bachelor's degree with first or second class honours from The University of Sydney, or equivalent qualification. Alternatively, you may be admitted having passed a qualifying examination at an equivalent standard. This could be the completion of a period of relevant advanced study and research towards a master's degree at the University of Sydney.

In addition, applicants whose qualifications were obtained from an institution where the language of instruction was not English need to obtain a Combined Universities Language Test score of at least 75%, or an International English Language Testing Service test score of at least 7.0 (and individual band of speaking and writing of at least 7.0), or a Test of English as a Foreign Language score of at least 600 with at least 5.0 in the Test of Written English.

### **2. Supervision**

Applicants cannot be admitted to research higher degree programs until supervisory arrangements have been made. Each research higher degree student must have a supervisor and at least one associate supervisor.

The Academic Board's guidelines on research higher degree supervision outline requirements of supervisors and associate supervisors. They also specify that supervisors should not, in general, carry a supervisory load of greater than five equivalent full-time students:

## **Supervisors**

### **(a) General requirements**

To be eligible to be appointed as a supervisor, a person must:

- (i) be a member of the academic staff of the University at Level B or above; or
- (ii) be considered appropriate by the Dean of the Faculty on a case by case basis; and
- (iii) hold a qualification at a level above that for which the candidate seeks to be supervised, or
- (iv) hold a qualification at the same level as that for which the candidate seeks to be supervised and demonstrate a record of scholarly achievement; or
- (v) demonstrate current and active involvement in research appropriate to the field of study and a record of scholarly achievement to the satisfaction of the Dean of the Faculty on a case by case basis; and
- (vi) participate in activities for postgraduate research training supervision as the Dean of the Faculty may deem appropriate; and
- (vii) meet such other conditions as the Dean of the Faculty may deem appropriate.

### **(b) Specific requirements**

To be eligible to be appointed as a supervisor, in addition to the general requirements above, a person must:

- (i) have acted as an associate supervisor for the successful completion of at least two candidatures at a recognised tertiary institution; or
- (ii) have acted as a supervisor or an associate supervisor for at least 12 months duration at a recognised tertiary institution, and have completed the Institute for Teaching and Learning Postgraduate Supervision Development Program, or equivalent<sup>1</sup>; or
- (iii) have acted as a supervisor for the successful completion of at least one candidature at a recognised tertiary institution.

### **Limits on supervision**

- (a) A supervisor shall not normally supervise more than five full-time equivalent postgraduate research candidates at one time, or pro rata for a supervisor employed on a fractional basis. Whenever a higher supervision load for a particular supervisor is proposed, the head of department/school shall make a recommendation, including the reason, to the Dean of the Faculty (or delegate) for approval.

### **Associate supervisors**

#### **(a) General requirements**

To be eligible to be appointed as an associate supervisor, a person must:

- (i) meet the general requirements specified in 5(2)(a) above; or
- (ii) have been appointed as an honorary associate of the University; or
- (iii) meet such other requirements as the Dean of the Faculty may determine.

(b) Specific requirements

To be eligible to be appointed as an associate supervisor, in addition to the general requirements above, a person must:

- (i) demonstrate ability to successfully supervise a candidature to completion; or
- (ii) meet such other specific requirements as the head of department/school (or delegate) may determine.

Associate supervisors, but not primary supervisors, may be from other institutions.

### 3. Resources

Applicants are required to provide, with their applications, a 500 word description of the preliminary study plan, as well as a statement of the resources required to complete the study. Equipment, space or personnel requirements in addition to those provided to all students must be identified. The school undertakes to provide basic infrastructure (for example, access to a desk and computer) but will generally not consider requests for additional resources. Additional resources are usually purchased with grants obtained by the supervisor, with a standard amount made available to the principal supervisor of research higher degree students (currently \$700 p.a. for full-time students and \$350 p.a. for part-time students) or with a Postgraduate Research Students' Stipend (up to \$2000). Applications for enrolment may be denied if there is not a strong prospect of availability of essential resources.

A statement from the Head of School on funding can be found at:

<http://ptwww.fhs.usyd.edu.au/Units/PG/Research/Head%20of%20School%20Message.htm>

Details of the Postgraduate Research Students' Financial Support Scheme can be found at

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/reschols/policy/prss.htm>

### 4. Competitiveness

Admissions to research higher degrees are competitive. Potential supervisors and the Postgraduate Research Coordinator have a shared responsibility for allocating positions in research higher degree programs to those students who have the most potential to complete high quality research and whose research interests can best be supported by the school. Potential supervisors do so by making a decision about whether they are or are not prepared to supervise a particular applicant. The Postgraduate Research Coordinator needs to consider if the student's track record is such that he or she could be expected to complete the program in a timely manner.

The Postgraduate Research Coordinator makes one of the following recommendations to the Head of School. The recommendation could be that the applicant:

- (a) be admitted to a preliminary or qualifying program. These programs should be completed in not less than one semester and in not greater time than the Faculty may prescribe but in any case in not longer than two years. In either case

students may not be enrolled in a higher research degree supported under the Research Training and Scholarships Scheme, and so they may be liable to pay fees

**Qualifying programs** involve coursework set by the school for individual students. For example, the student may be required to complete generic units of study from the coursework Masters programs. Students in qualifying programs are required to complete particular units of study as a condition of admission to a research higher degree program. Additional requirements may be set, such as a minimum grade. Students in qualifying programs enrol in one or more units of study, so they must attend classes, complete assessments and pay fees for their coursework, and the coursework is recorded on their academic transcripts. It is expected that students who satisfy the requirements of a qualifying program will be offered a place in the research higher degree program on meeting the requirements set for them.

*Preliminary programs* are also carried out prior to entering a research higher degree program but they do not constitute a formal condition for enrolment in the research higher degree program. Preliminary programs may involve formal enrolment, but could also simply involve attendance of postgraduate student workshops or audit of units of study. Preliminary programs are usually offered to applicants who are expected to be accepted into a research higher degree program but would benefit from training in specific areas prior to enrolment.

- (b) be offered admission to a research higher degree program as a full or part-time candidate. Some students may be offered admission to a research higher degree program *and* be asked to complete a preliminary program. Some applicants for positions in the PhD program, particularly those who do not formally satisfy requirements for entry into the PhD program, may be offered a position in the Masters program on the understanding that if they meet certain probationary requirements they may be transferred to the PhD program. These requirements should be communicated to the student in the letter of offer sent by student administration.

Off-campus students are required to submit a brief written plan that outlines how the school can be assured that there is adequate supervision, intellectual climate, opportunity for skill development, and resources for the student. Off-campus international students in the MAppSc program must spend a minimum of one semester on campus, and off-campus international students in the PhD program must spend a minimum of two semesters on campus.

- (c) not be offered a place in the higher degrees program or in a qualifying program.

## 5. Proposal

Applications for admission to a research degree (PhD, Masters, HScD) need to include a 500 word preliminary research proposal<sup>1</sup> as an attachment.

The purpose of the proposal is to encourage pre-enrolment planning/preparation by the student, supervisor and school that will assist prompt commencement of research work and timely completion of the candidature. This pre-enrolment planning and preparation is University Policy and is described in the Universities Postgraduate Studies Handbook. The written plan also provides the supervisor with an opportunity to judge the applicant's writing skills.

The candidate should include in the written proposal the information that most clearly shows that suitable preparation has occurred. This information will obviously vary quite widely but as a minimum the proposal should include:

- A working title for the thesis.
- The name(s) of the supervisor or other academic staff with whom the student has discussed their candidature.
- The issue, research question or hypothesis to be investigated.
- A description of the context and background reading leading to the applicant's interest in this research question.
- A brief explanation why the research question is significant.
- The research methodology or approach to be used. Where research facilities/equipment/resources beyond the infrastructure normally provided by the School are specified the plan should note how these will be accessed.
- An initial plan for completion with annual milestones.

The expectation is that the supervisor will have read and commented on drafts of the proposal. The proposal will be reviewed with the application by the Associate Dean (Graduate Research) who is required to ensure before admission to research degree candidature that there is every likelihood of a successful outcome.

The Postgraduate Research Coordinator may also assist students in the **HScD** course to find supervisors in the School of Physiotherapy. The structure of the HScD program is such that these arrangements will usually be put in place several years before supervision begins. Consequently supervisory arrangements for students in the HScD program are provisional and subject to change.

### Other important details

All students entering the school's research higher degree programs do so on a probationary basis.

The formal training program for students in research higher degree programs takes place in two two-day blocks: one in March and one in September. All students in NSW are expected to attend, and students from outside NSW are encouraged to attend wherever possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Faculty Graduate Studies Committee in March 2003 endorsed the following as equivalent to the 500 word proposal: (i) submission of the project synopsis where the applicant is going to work on an NHMRC or ARC funded project and (ii) submission of an ethics approval letter listing the applicant as one of the authorised personnel together with the project description from the ethics submission. With either method the supervisor needs to certify that the applicant has appropriate writing skills.