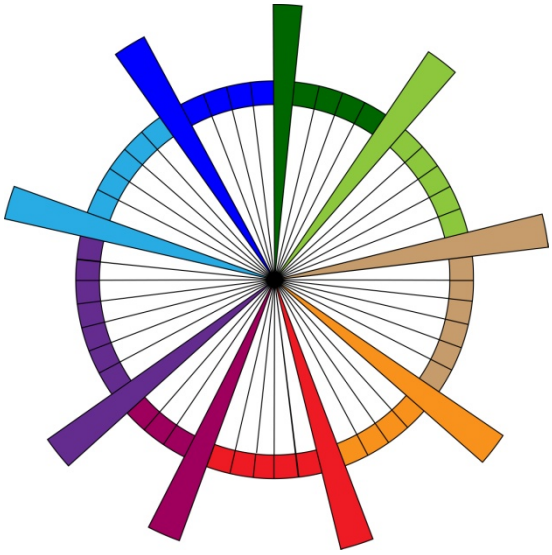
Higher Degree Research Training Excellence: A Good Practice Framework



Final Report 2013

Edith Cowan University

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Steering us in the right direction towards research training quality

<www.ddogs.edu.au>

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- the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDoGS) from both Australia and New Zealand;

- the Project Support Team, including Dr Sara Booth (University of Tasmania) and Mr Nigel Palmer (The University of Melbourne);

- Professor Barbara Evans (Consultant); and

- Dr Margaret Kiley (Evaluator).

List of acronyms used

APA	Australian Postgraduate Award
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
DDoGS	Council of the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies
DIISRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
ECU	Edith Cowan University
EFTSL	Equivalent full-time student load
GPF	Good Practice Framework
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
HE	Higher Education
IPRS	International Postgraduate Research Scholarship
OADRI	Objectives, Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement
OLT	Office for Learning and Teaching
QPR	Quality in Postgraduate Research
RTS	Research Training Scheme
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UTAS	University of Tasmania

Executive summary

Over the last decade, the Australian Government has tabled a number of reports targeting improved research and research training outputs from Australian universities. This is placing all Australian universities under increased pressure to promote quality and timely research training outputs.

The Good Practice Framework (GPF) for research training has been developed to respond to the Australian Government's agenda for research training and to promote Australian excellence in research training. The GPF assists institutions to identify key areas of good practice or gaps when reviewing and evaluating their research training processes and practices. The key elements of the GPF include:

- *Dimensions*: Critical high-level themes needed to deliver research training;
- *Components*: Sub-themes with policy, processes and practices that promote research training excellence;
- *Quality Assurance Checklists:* A list of questions that can be used to indicate quality;
- *Good Practice Guidelines and Resources*: Guidelines and resources developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDoGS), including case studies that exemplify good practice; and
- *External Reference Points*: Requirements and information needed in each *Dimension* by higher education (HE) institutions in Australia.

Project participation, review and feedback were extensive including the DDoGS from Australia and New Zealand, as well as experts from overseas institutions. The project team focused on a consultation process that encouraged open and iterative feedback from all participants through email, workshops and presentations. Successive reviews refining elements in the framework resulted in the GPF being well accepted by all contributors. The final version of the GPF is available on the DDoGS website (http://www.ddogs.edu.au).

In addition, DDoGS *Good Practice Guidelines* will be developed, and refined using experts from different institutions willing to share their expertise and experience in specific areas of research training. It is intended that four *Guidelines* will be developed by the end of 2013, with additional *Guidelines* developed in subsequent years. This is a continuous process whereby new *Guidelines* will be developed and refined as necessary. Work is also underway to implement the GPF at Edith Cowan University (ECU) through a gap analysis, with specific quality assurance questions for each *Component.* This customised template will be available on the ECU and DDoGS websites for other institutions to download and utilise.

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Introduction

Throughout the last decade, the Australian Government has placed research and research training high on its agenda, with a number of reports supporting its position and expectations of the higher education (HE) sector. New funding and auditing frameworks imposed by the Government to help improve quality, innovation and impact of research and research training are forcing Australian HE institutions to review and assess their approach to research training.

Recent Australian Government reports targeting improvement of research and research training at Australian Higher Education institutions include:

- Response to *Building Australia's Research Capacity* (Australian Government, 2009), the final report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian institutions. Recommendations included additional stipends to students in areas of national importance and skills shortage, doubling the number of International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (IPRS) places, extending the length of support under the APA (Australian Postgraduate Awards), and examination of funding arrangements under the Research Training Scheme (RTS);
- *Research Skills for an Innovative Future: A Research Workforce Strategy to Cover the Decade to 2020 and Beyond* (DIISR, 2011), which identified factors to promote the development of high quality research skills for an innovative future in Australia. These included increased flexibility of Commonwealth postgraduate research scholarships, review of the RTS program, examination of the full cost of research training provision in Australian institutions, development of new models for research training explicitly focused on the professional employment needs of graduates, and establishment and monitoring of research standards and quality benchmarks for research training; and
- *Defining Quality for Research Training in Australia* (DIISR, 2011), a consultation paper that invited institutions to help identify quality research training and how it can be measured and encouraged in Australian institutions.

As these reports show, the Government is holding Australian institutions responsible for ensuring that:

- quality and timely research training programs are being deployed at all institutions; and
- researchers are being given the required skills to produce new knowledge of world-class quality, which supports and fulfils their careers.

Currently from a research training point of view, there are concerns that there is wide variation in the higher degree by research (HDR) policies and procedures governing processes such as admissions, governance, training and supervision across Australian HE institutions. This can result in considerable differences in the success, quality and outcomes of research training and does not support the Government's position on improving research and research training. An environmental scan in this area suggests that there are countries

that have identified similar concerns and have developed uniform national guidelines for assuring academic quality standards for their institutions.[1]

In response to the Government's agenda, Edith Cowan University (ECU) proposed the development of a framework to improve research training quality in Australia with the collaboration of the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDoGS).

The Australian and Learning and Teaching Council awarded funding for this project in 2011.

Project aims

The Good Practice Framework (GPF) for research training aims to inform and guide Australian excellence in research training by identifying a set of consistent *Dimensions, Components, quality assurance processes and guidelines* that can be used by all Australian institutions.

This GPF provides institutions with a structured means of reviewing and evaluating their research training practices to help identify gaps and research training areas that can be developed or improved. Having access to a consistent framework also allows institutions to focus on further improving research training quality by benchmarking specific *Dimensions* at both national and international level.

The GPF can also be used to:

- provide HDR candidates with clear information and milestones for their research journey; and
- help identify themes for workshops, conferences and areas for improvement/good practice.

Methodology

Participants

Project team participants included:

- Project Leader, Professor Joe Luca;
- Project Manager, Ms Trish Wolski
- Consultant, Professor Barbara Evans;
- DDoGS members from Australia and New Zealand;
- Project Support Team, Dr Sara Booth (University of Tasmania), and Mr Nigel Palmer (The University of Melbourne);
- Expert reference group comprising both international and domestic academics, a representative from DIISRTE and the DDoGS executive;
- External Evaluator, Dr Margaret Kiley; and
- Reviewers from various institutions within and beyond Australia.

[1] http:/ / www.qaa.ac.uk/ Publications/ InformationAndGuidance/ Documents/ postgrad2004.pdf

Development of the GPF

Given the diversity of research training and contexts in Australian HE institutions, the design and development of a GPF to enhance research training quality and efficiency in Australian institutions required extensive consultation, review and feedback between the project team, DDoGS and a diverse group of stakeholders. The development process used the DDoGS *Framework for Best Practice in Doctoral Research Education in Australia* (developed in 2007 and updated it in 2008), other international research training frameworks, and extensive collaboration with Australasian institutions through DDoGS.

The consultation process encouraging open and iterative review of the GPF included meetings, presentations, workshops, and extensive email communication. The workshops included:

- *Working Party meeting, March 2012 (*DDoGS working party met in Melbourne to discuss and agree on key *Dimensions* and *Components* for framework);
- *DDoGS April 2012 meeting (*Working party members led group discussions to develop descriptors and quality assurance indicators for the key *Dimensions* and identify group of "champions" to support the development of each *Dimension)*;
- The Project Manager worked with the "champions" to develop the GPF between April and the November 2012 DDoGS meeting;
- *Workshop with Victoria University, June 2012* (The Project Leader ran a workshop on the GPF at Victoria University to locate gaps in the HDR training processes at that university); and
- *DDoGS November 2012 meeting* (Professor Janet Metcalfe from Vitae (a United Kingdom organisation championing personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes) opened the morning session with a conversation on UK research training and showed how the GPF aligned with their model. Workshops then focused on how to identify quality assurance process for the GPF *Component*s and strategies for university implementation of the GPF).

Other GPF presentations included:

- a presentation at the Quality in Postgraduate Research (QPR) conference on the 18th April 2012;
- a meeting with the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) on the 28th May 2012 to discuss the relevance of the GPF to the Government quality initiatives and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA); and
- a presentation at ECU Research Week 2012 on September 2012 to ECU staff and candidates interested in research training quality and improvement as well as two representatives from Curtin University.

The initial stages of the project included extensive discussion on the appropriate use of terminology. Having researched the terminology being used to define framework titles, the project team agreed on using *Dimensions* and *Components*. These are underpinned by the external reference points, which are requirements of government or legislation.

As the project then moved to developing greater detail through iterative feedback, the number of *Dimensions* varied from 11 to 8. The refinement process attempted to minimise overlapping concepts, and identify missing information.

Another key change that occurred during the many iterations of development related to development of specific quality assurance indicators for each component. Initially, there was agreement on the need for specific quality assurance indicators to allow institutions to rate research training processes against specific *Components* in the GPF. By the November meeting, it had become evident that a number of these indicators were based on common processes and so could be grouped into generic questions.

Review

During the consultation period, participants were asked to review and comment on required *Dimensions*, *Components*, GPF structure, quality assurance processes and *Good Practice Guidelines*. After each review, the Project Leader, Project Manager, Consultant and the Project Support Team analysed feedback from each institution to determine required changes.
Critical review points included:

- the Working party meeting in February 2012
  (After presentation of a draft based on information gathered from an environmental scan, the initial *Dimension*s and *Components* were agreed);
- the April 2012 DDoGS meeting
  (The structure of the framework was agreed by DDoGS and the *Dimension*s and *Components* were refined);
- the November 2012 DDoGS meeting
  (DDoGS agreed to the final draft of the GPF with refinements); and
- international reviewers providing insights into the operations of research training in from their countries.

Following all of the reviews the project team agreed on nine *Dimension*s that all stakeholders thought covered all required aspects of research training in Australia. A variety of communication forums also acknowledged that many institutions already exemplify good practice in various research-training areas identified in the GPF, and could be used as exemplars.

Evaluation

In addition to email interviews with a sample of participants, two evaluations were conducted on the GPF by an external evaluator.

The interim evaluation report completed in August 2012 focused on the process used to develop the GPF and suggested that cooperation from the stakeholders was driving the success of the project. According to the Evaluator, '*the very nature of this project and having it embedded in the work of the Council of Deans of Graduate Research means that there is a very strong likelihood that the outcomes of the project will be implemented across the sector*' (Dr Margaret Kiley, 2012).

The report from final evaluation (conducted in December 2012) provided very positive feedback. The Evaluator noted that the knowledge and importance of the project had been recognised in the HE sector and pointed out that '*the project has been addressed in other scenarios such as in the Inaugural meeting of the Early-Mid Career Researchers Forum – The voice of Australian Future Scientific Leaders 24-25 September 2012, Canberra*' (Dr Margaret Kiley, 2012). The full final evaluation report can be viewed at Appendix B.

Results

The Framework

The GPF comprises *Dimensions* and associated *Components* required for research training. As illustrated in Figure 1, the key elements of the GPF include:

- *Dimensions*: Critical high-level themes needed to deliver research training;
- *Components*: Sub-themes with policy, processes and practices that promote research training excellence;
- *DDoGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources*: Guidelines developed and approved by DDoGS, and case studies that exemplify good practice and help assure HDR program quality; and
- *External Reference Points*: Requirements and information needed in each *Dimension* by HE institutions in Australia.

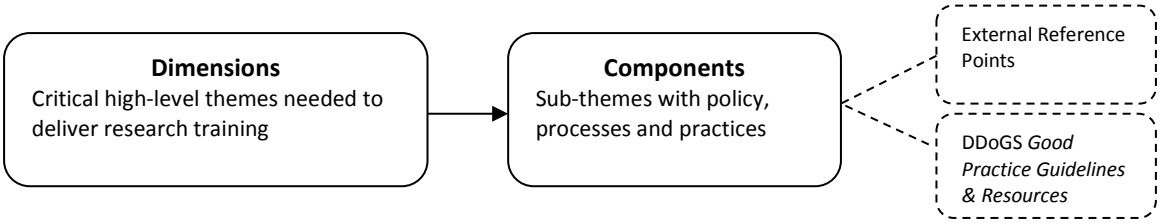

Figure 1: The GPF structure

A full version of the GPF can be viewed at Appendix A.

Dimensions and Components

Table 1: List of Dimensions and Components

Dimensions	Components
1. Governance	1.1 HDR Committee 1.2 Policies 1.3 Candidate Representation 1.4 Grievance Procedures and Appeals 1.5 Collaborative Research Support
2. Program and Outcomes	2.1 HDR Program Evaluation 2.2 Candidate Outcomes 2.3 Tailored Coursework and Research Training Skills 2.4 Professional Skill Development 2.5 Candidate Feedback Mechanisms
3. Selection and Admission	3.1 Initial Enquiry 3.2 Entry Pathways 3.3 Transfer and Advanced Standing 3.4 Matching Needs, Resources and Supervision 3.5 Selection, Approval and Offer
4. Supervision	4.1 Supervisor Capacity 4.2 Supervisor Eligibility 4.3 Supervisory Team Compliance 4.4 Supervisor Development and Support
5. Candidature Management	5.1 Supervisor and Candidate Responsibilities 5.2 Orientation and Induction 5.3 Confirmation of Candidature 5.4 Candidate Progression 5.5 Variations to Candidature
6. Responsible Conduct of Research	6.1 Responsible Research and Integrity 6.2 Ethics 6.3 Intellectual Property
7. Candidate Support	7.1 Scholarships 7.2 Research Culture and Engagement 7.3 Resources and Infrastructure 7.4 Travel Support 7.5 Pastoral Care 7.6 Support Services for Diversity 7.7 Post Thesis Submission Support
8. Employability Skills Development	8.1 Curriculum Vitae and Portfolio 8.2 Career Development 8.3 Networking 8.4 Interdisciplinary Awareness 8.5 Mobility and International Awareness
9. Examination	9.1 Pre Submission Review 9.2 Appointment of Examiners 9.3 Examination of Thesis 9.4 Conferral of Award

University research training alignment to the GPF

The GPF enables Australian institutions to align their research training processes with national good practice guidelines, and identify both their areas of strength and opportunities for improvement (Figure 2). Rather than specifying levels of performance, the GPF provides processes in the *Component*s that enable universities to review alignment to their goals, priorities and practices with the GPF.

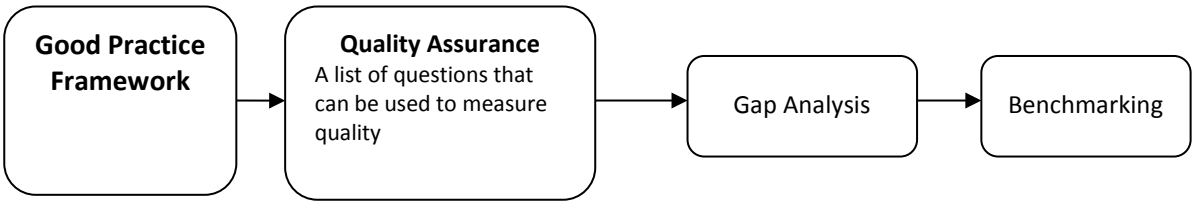

Figure 2: University alignment to the GPF

The GPF is supported by generic questions based on a six-point quality assurance checklist, derived from the *Objectives, Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement (OADRI) Cycle* (Woodhouse, 2012*)*. It can be used for each component, to examine and compare current HDR processes and measures for university alignment against each *Component* the GPF (Table 2).

Table 2: Quality Assurance Checklist

Phase	QA Checklist
Deployment	1. Are adequate policies, procedures or strategies in place in support of each component?
	2. Do the communications associated with this/each component have the appropriate level of clarity and transparency for their subject matter and audience?
Results	3. Is there sufficient evidence gathered on the activities and outcomes associated with each component?
	4. Is there adequate reporting of the activities and outcomes associated with this component against both internal and external reference points?
Improvement	**5.** Is there regular review of strategies, activities and outcomes associated each component?
	6. Is there regular reporting of relevant review and improvement efforts, of follow-up activities and on the outcomes of previous reviews?

Further developments

To ensure that the GPF remains current, the DDoGS executive will review it every 12 months. Further enhancements and developments will include:

Development and refinement of DDoGS Good Practice Guidelines

The next key stage is to further develop and refine the DDoGS *Good Practice Guidelines, which* provide key information to help guide institutions on important of research training *Components* identified in the GPF. These *Guidelines* require expert volunteers for their development and will be validated by the DDoGS.

Development of a gap analysis template and exemplar report

ECU has already begun using the GPF checklist to develop a gap analysis template with specific quality assurance questions for each *Component*. This customised ECU gap analysis template will be available on the ECU and DDoGS websites for other institutions to download and utilise.

In the first quarter of 2013, ECU will review its research training processes using the GPF. ECU will be consulting with stakeholders (including HDR candidates) to complete the gap analysis at all levels in the university. The results will be compared against strategic goals of the university, and an action plan will be developed to identify areas for improvement. As with the template, the results of this review will be available on the ECU website for those interested in viewing it as an exemplar.

Development of an online benchmarking tool

ECU is investigating the option to 'customise' a benchmarking tool developed for the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Academic Standards Framework to create an online benchmarking application for research training. Information from the gap analysis based on the GPF will be imported into this online application and used to identify areas of good practice or gaps between institutions. Rather than just providing quantitative data, the online application will compare research-training processes and provide detailed information about the quality of research training.

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Appendix A

Good Practice Framework for Research Training

 **DIMENSIONS**	**COMPONENTS**	**EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)**	**DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources**
1. GOVERNANCE Institutions ensure there is an efficient and effective Higher Degree by Research (HDR) governance framework, which assures and enhances research training quality and reports against internal and external reference points.	**1.1 HDR Committee** A central HDR committee defined by clear terms of reference provides leadership for the delivery of postgraduate research training across the university, and reports to a higher governing body within the institution. It is responsible for: • Overseeing rules, policies and procedures for candidates; • Monitoring candidate performance; • Promoting quality research training environment and outcomes; and • Overseeing new, and reviewing current HDR programs.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (CRICOS) Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).	
	1.2 Policies HDR policies are accessible, explicit, equitable, transparent, clearly communicated and regularly reviewed.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Category Standards	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
		Provider Course Accreditation Standards *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (CRICOS)	
	1.3 Candidate Representation The institution has a policy for candidate representation on HDR committees. Guidelines associated with this policy are fair, transparent, consistently applied and publicised.	Provider Registration Standards	
	1.4 Grievance Procedures and Appeals Polices and guidelines for resolving HDR complaints, grievances and appeals are: • Explicit, clearly communicated, and are readily available to candidates, supervisors and others on the institution's website and through other media; and • Addressed through formal procedures in a timely manner following principles of natural justice.	*Higher Education Support Act 2003* *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* *Equal Opportunities Act 2010* *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991*	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	1.5 Collaborative Research Support The institution has policy on collaborative research projects that is explicit and transparent. Joint research projects, joint badged degrees and cotutelles require partners to agree from the outset on how the research, including the candidate's role will be managed.	Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*	
2. PROGRAM AND OUTCOMES The institution has HDR programs that require candidates to produce quality research. In the case of doctoral candidates, this must be a significant body of original research and contribution to knowledge.	**2.1 HDR Program Evaluation** Research degree programs are evaluated for success in meeting expectations and needs of candidates, employers, discipline groups and the broader community, through: • Completion rates, time to completion, retention rates; • Examination outcomes; • Candidate surveys; • Alignment with the strategic directions of the institution; and • Alignment with the institution's statements on graduate attributes.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards Provider Category Standards AQF *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (CRICOS)	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	2.2 Candidate Outcomes A graduate of a research degree program will have demonstrated the capacity to: • Design and implement at a high level of originality and quality, either an original research project(s) of significance to a discipline or cross-disciplinary field, or a research based project(s) addressing a important problem or question concerning policy and/or practice in an profession or industry; • Present, using one or more appropriate media, a substantial and intellectually coherent product or products(s) such as a thesis, dissertation and artefacts, or exegesis and portfolio of creative works and/or performance, for submission to external examination against international standards; • Work well with others and contribute beyond the area of their immediate research training as aligned with the graduate attributes; • Disseminate knowledge to the wider community; and • Effectively apply expert knowledge and skills as a scholar or leading practitioner.	Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research Provider Category Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	2.3 Coursework and Research Training Skills (see also Dimension 8) Research degree programs include support for the development of advanced knowledge and research skills through: • Coursework and/or research training program requirements, which are clearly communicated prior to enrolment; • A 'Needs Assessment' for each candidate on appropriate coursework and/or research skills training , prepared at the outset of study and reviewed regularly during candidature; and	Provider Registration Standards AQF	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	• Timely, regular and constructive feedback provided to candidates on their ongoing skills development.		
	2.4 Professional Skill Development (see also Dimension 8) Research candidates are provided with opportunities to develop professional and generic/transferable skills during their research program that are relevant to their individual needs and career aspirations. These opportunities are widely promoted and may be offered by research centres/ laboratories, schools, faculties or by central units. A formal record of successful completion is available through, for example, the maintenance of a portfolio by the candidate or through the provision of certificates for successful completion.	Provider Category Standards AQF	
	2.5 Candidate Feedback Mechanisms The institution has in place mechanisms to: • Collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all stakeholders in HDR training and support; • Regularly survey candidates and provide feedback on the results and any consequent changes; • Provide candidates with the opportunity to give confidential feedback in a safe environment; and • Conduct separate exit surveys for candidates who complete and do not complete.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
3. SELECTION AND ADMISSION The institution ensures that	**3.1 Initial Enquiry** The institution provides clear, detailed, accurate and easily accessible information to allow applicants to make informed choices at the point of initial enquiry.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
selection and admissions procedures are inclusive, clear and easily accessible, consistently applied and equitable. These requirements ensure successful candidates complete their research in a timely manner.		Accreditation Standards *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (CRICOS) AQF	
	3.2 Entry Pathways Clear information is provided on eligibility and entry pathways into HDR programs for domestic and international candidates, including opportunities for entry outside normal routes and/ or under exceptional circumstances. Distinction is made between recognising prior academic study and/or professional experience for the purpose of determining eligibility and for allowing credit for course requirements. The same evidence of prior experience cannot be used for both course entry and subsequent credit.	Provider Course Accreditation Standards *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (CRICOS)	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	3.3 Transfer and Advanced Standing The institution has: • Policies and guidelines that allow flexible pathways into and out of different HDR programs including transfer (credit, intellectual property and EFTSL consumed) within and between institutions; • Inter-institution or cross sector agreements about admission standards; and • Transparent processes and criteria for determining eligibility for advanced standing or credit transfer.	Provider Course Accreditation Standards The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (CRICOS) AQF	
	3.4 Matching Needs, Resources, and Supervision (See also Dimensions 4 and 7) The institution has transparent processes and determines if an adequate fit exists between a student and the institution, the viability of the project, supervision capacity across the disciplines, and adequacy of resources to guide HDR enrolment targets (for example, number of enrolments). Each entering candidate will be provided with: • A suitable supervisor/supervisory team; • Appropriate research and research training infrastructure; and • Adequate financial and any other necessary resources for the proposed research project agreed to with the supervisor/supervisory team, aligning with institutional policy.	Provider Course Accreditation Standards	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	3.5 Selection, Approval and Offer Selection processes for domestic and international candidates are transparent, consistent, effective, efficient and equitable. Approval and a subsequent offer will indicate the institution believes the match between candidate, supervisor(s) and project (see also 3.4) is likely to lead to the timely completion of a high quality research degree. At the time of selection the institution requires that candidates have English language proficiency at the level of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as agreed by the institution and provide further support to those candidates whose English is a second language.	*Higher Education Support Act 2003* Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
4. SUPERVISION The institution provides HDR candidates with a supervisory team that has an appropriate mix of expertise in the discipline(s) of the candidate's research, the relevant research methods, and in supervising successful research degree completions.	**4.1 Supervision Capacity** The institution ensures that: • There are sufficient experienced supervisors to support all candidates (entering and enrolled), and that alternative supervision is available in the event of staff leaving or becoming unavailable; • Research supervision is formally and transparently recognised in workload formulae; and • Policies and/ or guidelines exist regarding the number of candidates that a member of staff should supervise at any one time.	Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards Provider Category Standards	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
The supervisory team must mentor and actively assist the candidate, meet the academic and administrative requirements of the institution, tailor their practice to the needs of individual candidates and provide access to appropriate support and pastoral care as required.	**4.2 Supervisor Eligibility** The institution has a system for recording supervisor eligibility, and a policy on the appointment of supervisors that makes reference to: • The skills and experience relevant to supervising projects in a given area; • The supervisor's level of research activity; • Relevant qualifications; and • Ongoing involvement in developing and maintaining knowledge and expertise in research degree supervision. The principal supervisor must meet relevant eligibility criteria, coordinate support for the research project, and lead the supervisory team for each candidate. It is expected that other members of the supervisory team would also normally meet relevant eligibility criteria.	Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	4.3 Supervisory Team Compliance The supervisory team consists of a principal and one or more supervisors who may have different roles in the supervisory process. The roles are clearly defined and agreed to by the supervisors and the candidate (see also 5.1). The institution has a system for monitoring supervisor performance and managing underperforming supervisors.	Provider Category Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	4.4 Supervisor Development and Support The institution makes provision for: • Supervisor induction programs for newly appointed supervisors and experienced supervisors new to the institution; • Mentoring in supervision for early career researchers; and • A broad range of HDR supervisor development programs.	Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research Provider Course Accreditation Standards	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
5. CANDIDATURE MANAGEMENT The institution provides clear, detailed and accessible information to candidates and supervisors to support them in managing candidate progress and professional development.	**5.1 Supervisor and Candidate Responsibilities** The entitlements, roles and responsibilities of supervisors and candidates are clearly defined and communicated. Specific provisions are outlined in a candidature agreement signed by each candidate and the principal supervisor (on behalf of the institution).	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards AQF Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research.	
	5.2 Orientation and Induction Orientation and induction programs for candidates should provide: • Clear and comprehensive information on expectations, degree requirements, candidate management, and the range of support services available. • Information related to international candidate requirements; and • Clearly articulated responsibility for orientation and induction programs at academic unit and institutional level.	Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research Provider Registration Standards	
	5.3 Confirmation of Candidature Confirmation of candidature requires transparent and demonstrable evidence that the candidate is highly likely to fulfil their degree requirements in the required time. Candidate enrolment will be provisional until confirmation has been successful which occurs within the first year of enrolment. Confirmation requires: • Ethics approval (see also 6.2); • A comprehensive research proposal, including work completed to date, with rigorous assessment of the academic merits; and	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	• An oral presentation to a group including peers and academic staff with both oral and written feedback provided. No candidate will be confirmed until these requirements are fully met. Where candidature is not confirmed, advice is provided about possible alternative academic or other pathways.		
	5.4 Candidate Progression Candidate progress is reviewed at least once a year against an agreed project plan. The process should allow for: • Supervisor and candidate access to view each other's input; • Supervisors and candidates to express confidential comments to an independent authority; • Processes to intervene when candidate progress is below expectations. This may include the provision of additional support, or alternative academic pathways and where appropriate, a managed exit; and • Effective processes to respond immediately when supervision is below expectation (see also dimension 4).	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	5.5 Variations to Candidature Opportunities to alter candidature arrangements are available and clearly communicated to candidates. Policy explicitly details the circumstances under which a candidate can withdraw from the program, suspend candidature, amend study load and transfer between courses.		

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
6. RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH Research training is supported by academic structures, policies and practices that require, facilitate and promote responsible research and integrity that aligns with the general principles of the *Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research*[2].	**6.1 Responsible Research and Academic Integrity** Policies and procedures clearly outline the institutional and candidate responsibilities to comply with the *Australian Code for Responsible Research,* which include: • Management of research data and primary materials; • Supervision of research candidates; • Publication and dissemination of research findings; • Authorship; • Peer Review; • Conflict of interest; and • Collaborative research across institutions and with industry partners.	Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research Provider Registration Standards Provider Category Standards Guidelines under Section 95 of the Privacy Act 1998	
	6.2 Ethics Candidates and supervisors are expected to conduct their academic affairs with honesty, respect, fairness and responsibility, and are made aware of principles regarding ethical behaviour. There is a mechanism in place to ensure all projects requiring ethical approval (including specific procedures for animal and human experimentation) are identified and approved before data collection commences. Regular workshops, other opportunities and resources are made available on ethical behaviour and the process for obtaining ethics approval for research projects.	Provider Registration Standards National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research Values and Ethics Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research	

[2] Part A Principles and Practices to Encourage Responsible Research Conduct – Section 1: General Principles of Responsible Research

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
		The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes.	
	6.3 Intellectual Property Prior to commencement, candidates and supervisors are made aware of: • The institution's policy relating to the management of intellectual property; • Any shared intellectual property arrangements with external partners; and • Advice and support on the translation of research innovations into new products. Independent legal advice on the assignment of intellectual property through a third party is made available to candidates and paid for by the institution.		
7. CANDIDATE SUPPORT The institution ensures that candidates have access to required resources which enable timely completion of a quality degree including appropriate physical, financial, administrative, academic, counselling and	**7.1 Scholarships** Policies and procedures for the allocation of domestic and international scholarships/stipends are transparent, and include clearly defined criteria and information of all scholarship conditions.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards *Higher Education Support Act 2003* - Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2010 (DIISR)	

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
disability support services. The institution is committed to providing a research environment for research candidates that is engaging, culturally sensitive, locally and globally relevant and supports diversity.		ERA	
	7.2 Research Culture and Engagement A dynamic and inclusive research culture exists within academic units and across the institution, including formal and informal activities and opportunities for engagement with other researchers, academic peers, industry and candidate support areas (see also 7.6).	Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	7.3 Resources and Infrastructure The institution has a policy for resources that is transparent and available to candidates. These include basic infrastructure and other resources needed to support candidates in various modes (full time, part time, remote and off campus). It is the responsibility of the academic unit to confirm, track and review that resources required for timely completion are available for the duration of the research project. Candidates cannot commence until resource requirement commitment is made.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	Statement of Minimum Resources (CAPA)
	7.4 Travel Support Academic conferences, field work and mobility (see also 8.5) are important development opportunities for candidates. The institution should provide funding for : • Academic conferences (domestic and international) and research engagement which is managed in a fair and equitable manner across the institution; and • Domestic off campus and distance candidates to travel to and from campuses (if applicable and appropriate).		

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	7.5 Pastoral Care The institution is committed to providing appropriate levels of pastoral support for all candidates and promoting health and wellbeing, which include counselling, peer support, and spiritual needs. The institution provides clear information and advice to all candidates on personal support services available on campus (see also 7.6) as well as supporting Postgraduate Associations in the role of supporting candidates experiencing academic or personal difficulties.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	7.6 Support Services for Diversity The institution provides support services for diverse groups. These include (but are not limited to) indigenous, international, and off campus candidates, and those with a disability**.** Clear and accessible information is available on support services and includes, but not restricted to: • Resource information and advice; • Liaising with supervisors; • Library services; • Access to aids, software and equipment, English language programs; and • Interpreting services.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	*Indigenous HDR students*
	7.7 Post Thesis Submission Support An appropriate level of post thesis submission support is available for candidates. This may include publication support, desk and library access, career counsellors and other institution services. The institution has a policy on the placement of all theses in institutions' open access repositories.		

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
8. EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT The institution supports candidate's awareness of their employability, and supports candidates to be competitive and successful in both academic and non academic careers**.** The institution works with the candidate to determine short, medium and long-term goals that assist the candidate with employability skills and their broader development as a researcher. Attention to career development needs to be given during candidature, and also after submission of	**8.1 Curriculum Vitae and Portfolio** Candidates have access to processes and support mechanisms to help build their Curriculum Vitae as well as professional and academic portfolios.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
	8.2 Career Development Candidates are provided with relevant opportunities, information and advice about careers in academia, business, industry, Government and non-profit sectors. Skill gaps and career development plans are regularly discussed during candidature to help support HDR employability. The supervisor has responsibility to ensure that the candidate is aware of and has access to opportunities for enhancing their development as a researcher and their future employability. Candidates should be made aware that they are responsible for managing and pursuing their career options.	Provider Category Standards	
	8.3 Networking Processes exist that encourage candidates to network with potential employers including industry, Government and community, and alumni and other academics, to enhance their career opportunities. The institution maintains a database of potential employers and former HDR alumni willing to engage with current and intending research candidates.		

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
thesis for examination.	**8.4 Interdisciplinary Awareness** The institution provides interdisciplinary seminars and events, as well as clear and easily accessible guidelines to help enrich and extend the candidate's research training experience beyond their discipline. Interdisciplinary research projects are supported with appropriate funding, supervision and examination (see also 2.1).		
	8.5 Mobility and International Awareness Candidates are encouraged to engage with, and experience different cultures and environments through collaborative partnerships (see also 1.5), formal or informal cotutelles or conjoint arrangements, and/or academic travel including international and national conference participation.	Provider Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	
9. EXAMINATION Work submitted for examination meets international standards and the examination process ensures successful candidates merit the award of the degree.	**9.1 Pre Submission Review** HDR theses are reviewed in a manner determined by the institution prior to being submitted for examination to ensure that theses meet appropriate institutional standards.	Provider Course Registration Standards Provider Course Accreditation Standards	*Editing research theses*
	9.2 Appointment of Examiners Examiners must be recognised as international experts in the field or discipline of the thesis. Examiners must be external, independent and hold a degree at the level they are examining or higher, unless there are exceptional circumstances that are approved by the appropriate institution committee.		*Conflict of interest guidelines for appointment of examiners*
	9.3 Examination of Theses The institution has a policy and guidelines on the examination of theses. The examination process requires: • Declaration regarding conflict of interest from the examiners (as per the DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines);	Provider Course Accreditation Standards	*Doctoral examination*

DIMENSIONS	COMPONENTS	EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS (Australia)	DDOGS Good Practice Guidelines and Resources
	• Transparency throughout the process, with clear communication to all stakeholders involved; • Appropriate and clear guidance is provided to examiners, including guidance in the examination of theses presented in different modes; • Timely outcomes; • Explicit and accessible examination criteria; • Explicit processes for managing divergent examination outcomes and allowing opportunity for appeal; and • Procedures that ensure the candidate is kept informed of examination progress and any unavoidable delays.		
	9.4 Conferral of Award The senior committee responsible for HDR academic governance determines award of research degrees based on examination results and advice from examiners. Conferral certifies that the candidate has met the AQF and institution requirements for the award of the degree.	AQF	

Appendix B

Final Evaluation Report

HDR Training Excellence in Australia: A Good Practice Framework
Final Evaluation report, December 2012

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I am very pleased to be able to provide the final report for the project *HDR training Excellence in Australia: A Good Practice Framework* and sincerely congratulate the team, Professor Luca and Trish Wolski along with Dr Sara Booth, Professor Barbara Evans and Nigel Palmer who have provided specific and very helpful advice to the project.

I will address each of the following headings and then provide a summary.

How do the planned processes relate to what was actually put in place for the project? What caused the variations from the processes that were initially proposed?

As outlined in the interim report with the inclusion of Sara Booth (University of Tasmania), Professor Barbara Evans (Consultant), and Nigel Palmer (University of Melbourne) the project took on an additional benchmarking approach which enables the outcomes of the project to have broader application. With the involvement of the University of Tasmania a positive development has occurred and that is the opportunity to use Tasmania's online tool for benchmarking. The current benchmarking tool allows the University of Tasmania to benchmark across the schools/faculties around teaching and learning and Dr Booth has suggested the project could use the tool and to allow benchmarking within and across institutions. Professor Evans and Nigel Palmer have been particularly helpful in the revisions and reviews of the numerous drafts of the framework.

Furthermore, with the very active involvement of the Council of Australasian Deans and Directors of Graduate Research (DDoGS) the framework has been modified a number of times, retitled and now in a form which makes it useful for New Zealand institutions to adapt for use in the future. As a result, through discussion with the Deans the word 'Australia' has been taken out of the title.

Also, with the change of name of the dimension "Career Progression" to "Employability Skill Development" the framework has addressed a particular issue raised by the DDoGS as it was felt that career progression put too much emphasis on the supervisor being responsible for candidates being successful in their careers. Another change of terminology which has helped with the broad acceptance of the framework is the use of the term "Checklist" rather than "Performance Measure".

The workshops at the DDoGS meetings were an excellent means for getting everyone to participate and have buy-in. This was particularly helped by the need by institutions to come to terms with the significance of the AQF and TEQSA.

How is the involvement of participants being managed to enable the most effective communication and outcomes?

At the November 2012 DDoGS meeting in Melbourne the team members conducted a full afternoon workshop where all DDoGS were involved in working in groups to address the implementation of the framework. This was a particularly helpful opportunity as it raised a number a issues that were able to be addressed either at the time or over the next two days of the meeting.

The project team had been able to share the work with Professor Alan Robson, Chair of the Higher Education Standards Panel who reported at the DDoGS meeting that he viewed the framework as particularly helpful as institutions prepare for TEQSA. Also at the DDoGS meeting, Dr Carol Nicoll addressed the meeting and expressed her sincere interest and support for the framework as a means of institutions preparing for their TEQSA Audit.

The project team was assiduous in involving and respecting the views of the many stakeholders and existing groups and in bringing together different ways of thinking and approaches to ensure a multi-dimensional approach to this complex project.

What have been the observable outcomes? Which of these were intended project outcomes, which were unintended outcomes?

Clearly the most obvious outcome of the project is the Framework which will be available for all institutions to use as they evaluate their doctoral programs and support.

A second outcome is the Gap Analysis undertaken by ECU as a model for others to use.

These two outcomes are truly significant, particularly in light of AQF and TEQSA.

What factors help and hinder the achievement of the outcomes?

As noted in the interim report the enthusiasm of the project team is one of the main benefits to the project. Added to this is the respect with which Professor Luca is held by his fellow Deans.

To what extent is the project approach considered appropriate, efficient and effective?

Between the various DDoGS meetings the team worked assiduously, involving and supporting their topic champions in the development of the framework so that by the time of the next national meeting the developments were able to be effectively presented and debated.

The project has been addressed in other scenarios such as in the Inaugural meeting of the Early-Mid Career Researchers Forum – The voice of Australian Future Scientific Leaders 24-25 September 2012, Canberra.

Of particular significance is that the project has been done on time and on budget.

Are there lessons learned from this project that might be useful for other institutions and projects?

If there were other groups considering a similar project they would need to seriously consider the level of buy-in they might be able to gain from their organisation. It was no mean feat engaging the Deans with their vested interests, personalities, and university idiosyncrasies.

What measures, if any, have been put in place to promote sustainability of the project's focus and outcomes?

This project has been actively embraced by the DDoGS, both from Australia and New Zealand so it is to be expected that the framework will implemented across the sector. This is particularly the case given the exhortations by Professor Robson (HESP) and Dr Nicoll (TEQSA)

There are plans by Professor Luca to apply for an Extension Grant to enable the Project Manager to continue one-day per week to support institutions in the implementation of the framework, and in particularly the Gap Analysis.

As the Evaluator I strongly support any extension for the project, as it has the support of all of the Deans and being able to help various institutions undertake their Gap Analysis would be an excellent outcome of the project. This particularly will be the case when the first few institutions have had their TEQSA review as they might throw new light on some of the issues.

What are the implications of this project for similar, future OLT projects?

As outlined earlier, working with a professional/discipline-based association in the development of a shared framework, set of goals and objectives or practices is no mean feat. Therefore, any groups considering the implementation of such a project should give serious consideration to the leader of the project and her/his standing and reputation with colleagues.

Suggestions for the future

Two particular issues that were raised during the discussion on developing specific DDoGS guidelines in final workshop at the DDoGS November meeting include: the differentiation between supervisor capacity and supervisory capacity. With the former the issue relates to the quality and ability of the supervisor and the latter the capacity of the discipline or school to be able to provide an adequate research experience for candidates.

Secondly, related to individual supervisor capacity is the issue of the non-performing supervisor. This is recognized as a management and educational issue in most institutions, and one that is generally poorly handled.

I know that team members have plans to write a journal paper and I strongly urge them to submit this as soon as possible and to plan a follow-up paper as a result of the implementation of the framework.

I would like to thank Professor Luca and Trish Wolski for allowing me to be involved in this very exciting project.

Margaret Kiley
External Evaluator
December 2012