



Australian Government
Department of Education and Training

Research Training Implementation Plan

Progress Report

July 2018



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The document must be attributed as the *Research Training Implementation Plan Progress Report, July 2018*.

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Introduction

This report is an update on progress in implementing the [Research Training Implementation Plan](#). The Plan, released on 22 December 2017 by Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Education and Training, responds to the *Review of Australia's Research Training System (2016)* prepared by the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA).

The Plan was developed by the Research Training Implementation Working Group, which comprised representatives from the higher education, industry and government sectors, including Indigenous and higher degree by research (HDR) student representatives.

The working group developed eighteen actions to address the Review's findings under five Priority Issues:

1. Pathways to HDR training
2. Industry-university collaboration, including placements
3. Equity, including Indigenous participation
4. Quality of the HDR training system
5. Data and evidence to better monitor HDR system performance.

The Plan identifies lead organisations for each action, including the Department of Education and Training (DET), the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR), Universities Australia (UA), and the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group). Drawing on updates from the lead organisations, the department will publish six-monthly progress reports until the actions are fully implemented.

This first report documents the progress the organisations have made from December 2017, when the Plan was released, to July 2018.

For each action, the report outlines the progress made by the lead organisations and their next steps. Where relevant, links to related documents are provided.

The department is grateful to the lead organisations for their contributions and assistance in preparing this report. We would also like to thank all those working to implement the actions.

Priority Issue 1: Pathways to HDR training

Action 1.1 Monitor new pathways to HDR training, undertake modelling and review the use of RTP funding

DET to monitor and model the impact of new Higher Degree by Research (HDR) pathways programs on the research training system, including the balance between PhD and Masters by Research places. This will include reporting on enrolments in specific HDR pathways programs, HDR completion numbers and HDR completion timeframes based on the pathways taken by students. Based on the outcomes of monitoring and modelling, DET to review the use of Research Training Program (RTP) funding in supporting HDR pathways.

Responsibility: DET – by December 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department is currently analysing HDR enrolments and finances, drawing on recent trends in HDR pathways and using data from the Higher Education Data Collection (HEDC) and other sources.

Due to the relative infancy of new HDR pathway programs, the initial analysis will need to be updated and refined as additional data becomes available.

Next steps

Based on this research, the department will publish a series of reports on HDR pathways, including:

- descriptive analysis of enrolment and completion numbers of new HDR training pathways compared to traditional pathways
- modelling the impact the RTP funding model is having on new HDR training pathways and Masters by Research places
- analysis on HDR completion timeframes (to be provided in the second half of 2019 once the department receives data from new HEDC thesis submission and HDR completion timeframe data items).

The department will publish the first HDR pathways summary report by the end of 2018, with further reports to follow. Separately, the department will be conducting an evaluation of the new Research Block Grant (RBG) arrangements prior to the end of the transitional arrangements in 2021. The impacts on RTP funding of new HDR pathways will also be considered in this context.

Action 1.2 Consult on the new CGS postgraduate scholarship arrangements

As announced as part of the Commonwealth higher education reform, DET will consult universities, students and other stakeholders on the proposed changes to the postgraduate scholarships system later in the year.

Responsibility: DET – subject to the passage of legislation

Status

Action as proposed is not required due to change of policy

Progress to date

Legislation to implement the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) postgraduate scholarship arrangements did not pass the Senate and this measure is no longer Government policy. In the 2017–18 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Government announced that it would proceed with reforms, including a new allocation mechanism based on institutional outcomes and industry needs for sub-bachelor and postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs).

Next steps

The Government will be consulting with the sector in 2018 on new arrangements for the allocation of sub-bachelor and postgraduate CSPs from 2019.

Priority Issue 2: Industry-university collaboration

Action 2.1 Principles to guide industry-university collaboration in HDR training

The Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) and the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) to work together to develop and disseminate complementary principles that build on the range of available models of industry engagement in HDR training, including:

- principles for university collaboration with industry in HDR training (for use by universities)
- principles for industry collaboration with universities in HDR training (for use by industry partners).

The principles should promote the short- and long-term benefits of engagement, including the benefits HDR candidates can offer industry, and address issues such as the establishment of clear expectations and protections for all parties, including in relation to IP arrangements.

Responsibility: ACGR and Ai Group, in consultation with universities and industry sector stakeholders – by July 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

ACGR and Ai Group representatives have met on two occasions to plan the approach to this joint deliverable. ACGR convened a focus session at the ACGR National Meeting on 16 April 2018, discussing the elements that should be included in the overarching principles and the information that would be helpful in a guide for university users. A set of Principles to Guide University-Industry Collaboration in HDR Training has been developed by ACGR and has been reviewed by the Executive Committee prior to circulation to the membership.

The organisations are also developing industry and university-facing guides to assist with the implementation of university/industry engagement.

Next steps

- Both organisations will publish the set of overall principles to guide collaboration by mid-August 2018. The guides for universities and industry will be fully drafted by mid-August for release later in 2018.
- The ACGR guide for universities will be published on the ACGR website and circulated directly to Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) (DVC-R) and via the ACGR membership.
- Ai Group's guide for industry partners will be published on Ai Group's website and promoted in Ai Group's weekly newsletter to companies.

Action 2.2 Promote availability of HDR industry internships and other collaboration

ACGR and Ai Group to encourage their members to promote internships and other collaboration opportunities to students, including by publishing information on their websites.

Responsibility: ACGR and Ai Group – by March 2018

Status

Complete

Progress to date

ACGR has undertaken the following actions:

- Discussions on international models of industry engaged PhDs were held at the ACGR International Forum in Vietnam in November 2017.
- A background paper outlining all types of industry engagement was circulated to all ACGR members for discussion at the ACGR National Meeting in April 2018.
- An Australian Postgraduate Research Intern (APRI) presentation was provided by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) to all ACGR members at the same meeting.
- Internship and other collaboration opportunities were promoted through the monthly ACGR Update.
- ACGR has established and annually makes a national award for Excellence in Promoting Industry Engagement in Graduate Research.

Ai Group has undertaken the following actions:

- Ai Group promotes the uptake of postgraduate research internships and other collaboration activities through its Innovation Facilitators' activities under the Entrepreneurs' Programme.
- Ai Group promoted AMSI's APR.Intern program through its weekly newsletter to member companies in May 2018.
- Collaboration activities between industry and universities are developed and promoted by Ai Group through its involvement with Industry Growth Centres (IGCs) and Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs).
- Ai Group's Business Beyond Broadband report to companies in 2017 promoted the need for closer collaboration on research between industry and universities, including through student work-integrated learning opportunities.

Next steps

ACGR and Ai Group will continue to promote and support all types of industry collaboration in graduate research, both through communication of programs and opportunities as they become available and by exploring new and innovative models as they arise.

Action 2.3 Monitor implementation of the National Research Internships Program (NRIP)

DET to monitor and report to the sector on implementation of the NRIP, including in:

- supporting collaboration
- achieving targets for women and Indigenous student participation
- supporting STEM research.

To support this process, AMSI to report annually on system level issues, in addition to providing regular project reports to DET.

Responsibility: DET, in consultation with AMSI – ongoing, with first report by July 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

On 27 May 2017, the department finalised the grant for “Supporting more Women into STEM careers: Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) National Research Internships Program” for AMSI to deliver 1400 new PhD research based internships over four years, with a particular focus on women in STEM.

The key performance target for 2017, the commencement of 100 internships, was not met, with only 68 internships commenced in 2017. Key performance targets for 2018 are set and AMSI is to make up the 2017 internship shortfall in future years. As over 30 per cent of higher degree by research students are part-time, the department and AMSI have modified the requirements to allow these students to participate in the program.

In 2017, AMSI worked with 24 new industry partners, increased participation in the program to 18 universities and established 47 new industry-university collaborations. Almost all of the internships (97 per cent) are in STEM fields.

Targets for participation of women and Indigenous students were not set for 2017. They are key performance targets in 2018, at 40 per cent and 1.2 per cent respectively. These targets will increase substantially in future years as the program expands nationally.

Next steps

The key activities for 2018 are continued expansion of the program and associated activities, including

- Tasmanian internships beginning in July 2018
- New business development officers starting in NSW and VIC in June 2018
- Engagement with universities and peak bodies to increase university participation (ongoing)
- Marketing to increase the participation of underrepresented groups including women in STEM, regional/remote and indigenous students (ongoing).

Action 2.4 Establish baseline data and monitor internships and other collaboration

DET to build on existing data collections and processes to establish baseline data on HDR internships and other collaboration.

This would include ongoing monitoring and reporting on the implementation of new RBG arrangements and their impact on supporting greater collaboration.

Responsibility: DET – ongoing (6 monthly), with first report by July 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department has recently introduced a new indicator in the HEDC to collect data on the amount of engagement occurring between HDR students and research end-users. Data on five types of engagement is being collected:

- research internship with a research end-user
- joint supervision by a research end-user
- jointly funded or fully funded by a research end-user
- formal training on industry engagement
- other commercialisation and engagement activities.

The new indicator came into effect from 1 January 2018. The department will receive full-year 2018 data from higher education providers in mid-2019.

Next steps

The department will publish an annual table of HDR engagement data by higher education provider, with 2018 full-year data published in 2019 to be considered as “baseline data”.

Action 2.5 Collaborative IP templates

DET and the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (DIIS) to develop and make available templates to inform the development of IP arrangements involving HDR students in collaborative research activities, drawing from existing IP models such as the *IP Toolkit* and the AMSI internship program agreement template. The templates should address issues including:

- establishing trust and pursuing mutual benefit to support more formal commercial boundaries
- identifying and addressing key issues and challenges at the beginning of the relationship
- confidentiality arrangements in the examination of a thesis
- arrangements to allow for the publication of students’ research outputs

- agreeing on the commercial potential of the product and likely revenue after all costs have been taken into account.

The templates should be developed in consultation with industry and university stakeholders and informed by the industry-university collaboration principles developed by ACGR and Ai Group under Action 2.1, to ensure they are practical and will be adopted.

Responsibility: DET and DIIS – by mid-2019

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department and the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (DIIS) are examining a range of existing IP templates and guidance that are currently being used in a number of university-industry research collaboration initiatives.

Next steps

The departments will consult with industry and university stakeholders during the second half of 2018 about the type of information they require, taking into account the industry-university collaboration principles developed under Action 2.1 when they are finalised.

Priority issue 3: Equity, including Indigenous participation

Action 3.1 Better data collection, and monitoring and analysis

DET to:

- explore improvements to data reporting to support a better understanding of Indigenous student participation in the HDR system, including the pathways taken to HDR, access to scholarships and completion rates.
- monitor and undertake further analysis of the issues surrounding participation rates of other equity groups, particularly of low SES backgrounds and from Regional/Remote areas.
- explore the development of a four-digit Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) Field of Research (FoR) code for Indigenous research, including lower cost options that do not require a broader review of all FoR codes (noting that the term Indigenous research here applies to Indigenous subject matter, not to research done by Indigenous students).

Responsibility: DET to explore with relevant government agencies and sector stakeholders – by end 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department is in the process of examining existing Indigenous and equity data to identify areas for improvement.

A number of equity reports were developed for the Research Training Implementation Working Group, and the department is exploring the potential to adapt these for use in the regular reporting of equity data.

On 28 June 2018, the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) announced a review of the ANZSRC commencing in 2018-19. The ANZSRC currently includes 15 specific FoRs related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (ATSIS), and recognises alternative organisations of the classifications for ATSIS, Maori Studies and Pacific Peoples Studies. The review will provide an opportunity to consider the place of ATSIS in the ANZSRC.

Next steps

Using data from the HEDC and other data, the department will publish a number of summary reports, which will include

- descriptive analysis of trends in enrolment and completion numbers of HDR Indigenous students
- analysis of HDR training pathways undertaken by Indigenous students

- comparative analysis on HDR completion timeframes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (to be provided in the second half of 2019 once the department receives data from new HEDC thesis submission and HDR completion timeframe data items)
- analysis of trends in low SES and regional/remote HDR student participation.

The series of HDR equity reports will commence publication by the end of 2018.

The department will engage with the review of the ANZSRC as further details are announced.

Action 3.2 University Indigenous strategies and promotion of best practice

As part of their existing work to implement UA's Indigenous Strategy, UA and ACGR to work collaboratively with Indigenous stakeholders to support implementation of strategies by universities and disseminate information on best practice models, drawing on the experience of institutions that are achieving the best outcomes, including in the following areas:

- better information for Indigenous students on pathways to HDR and strategies to engage and recruit Indigenous HDR candidates, including networking and sharing of resources where universities have very low numbers of Indigenous students
- training for supervisors on how to support Indigenous students including promoting a better understanding of Indigenous research methodologies
- supporting the role of Indigenous academic staff and professors in implementation of university strategies, including the appointment of Indigenous research-only professors.

Responsibility: UA and ACGR, in consultation with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) and the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) – by mid-2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

ACGR, UA and NIRAKN collaborated to convene a focus session on this deliverable at the ACGR National Meeting on 16 April 2018. NIRAKN and UA outlined their strategies as they applied to research and research training.

ACGR has invited the nomination of examples of good practice in Indigenous graduate research training from its members, and has drafted a set of Good Practice Guidelines for the Training of Indigenous Researchers.

The UA DVC-R Committee, in its May 2018 meeting, discussed progress on institutional Indigenous research strategies, and what universities have learned in the course of consulting on these strategies.

Next steps

- As part of its Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020, UA will launch an online platform to identify and share good practices in Indigenous higher education by December 2018.

- ACGR will compile a collection of good practice examples to populate this resource.
- In particular, ACGR will liaise with UA, NIRAKN and NATSIHEC to review and finalise their Good Practice Guidelines for the Training of Indigenous Researchers for approval by the membership at the ACGR national meeting in November 2018.
- Both DVCs-R and ACGR will continue to work at Executive and full membership levels to share and promote indigenous HDR strategies amongst its members.

Action 3.3 Indigenous PhD forum

DET and UA to explore establishing an Indigenous PhD forum to focus on enablers and barriers to Indigenous HDR participation and outcomes for Indigenous HDR graduates, in consultation with NATSIHEC, NIRAKIN and Indigenous HDR students.

Responsibility – DET and UA, in consultation with NATSIHEC, NIRAKIN and Indigenous HDR students – by July 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

In February 2018, the department and UA held preliminary discussions to establish an approach to developing an Indigenous PhD forum.

In May 2018, the department convened a meeting with UA, NATSIHEC and NIRAKN to develop a concept for the forum. From this discussion, a number of issues emerged that require decisions by stakeholders, including

- desired forum outcomes and outputs
- whether the forum should be a stand-alone event or combined with an existing meeting or conference
- the number of participants, who should participate, and how participants will be identified
- potential sources of funding.

Based on the May 2018 meeting, the department and UA are developing a concept document to ensure there is a clear understanding of the structure, participants and outcomes for the forum.

Engagement with NATSIHEC and NIRAKN is continuing.

Next steps

The department and UA will circulate their concept document to stakeholders to finalise the concept of the forum. Once the details are agreed and funding identified, the department and UA will establish a process to identify a suitable organisation to deliver the event. It is anticipated that, subject to funding being obtained, the forum will be held in the second half of 2018, and a report produced by the end of 2018.

Action 3.4 Monitoring and reporting on scholarship support

DET to monitor changes in scholarship support and encourage improvements in access for Indigenous students and other equity groups:

- universities will be asked to report on levels of stipend support for Indigenous students
- DET will monitor and analyse access to part-time scholarships for equity groups and related developments with the ATO Review of Advice on Scholarships
- DET will publish the outcomes on an annual basis.

Responsibility: DET and universities who choose to participate – by 2018 academic year

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department has developed a draft survey to gather information about levels of stipend support for Indigenous HDR students from Table A and B higher education providers (HEPs). The outcomes of the Review of ATO Advice on Scholarships are still under consideration by the ATO.

Next steps

The Indigenous student survey template will be finalised by July 2018, and the 42 HEPs will be invited to provide completed surveys by September 2018. The department will collate and analyse this and other available data and prepare a summary report on scholarship support by the end of 2018. The department will continue to monitor the tax treatment of scholarships, including any updates from the ATO.

Priority Issue 4: Quality of the HDR system

Action 4.1 Revised Student Experience Survey

Subject to available resources, DET to explore opportunities to expand the current review of the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire to include the establishment and funding of a survey of current postgraduate research students to support comparison with similar surveys used overseas, such as the United Kingdom's Postgraduate Research Experience Survey for international benchmarking purposes.

Responsibility: DET – by July 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department is currently undertaking work to scope potential survey options, having regard to existing survey methodologies in Australia and overseas, and technical advice previously received from the Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning (QILT) Working Group and ACGR. At present, funding for a survey has not been identified.

Next steps

Over the next reporting period the department will liaise with universities about the internal surveys they presently use to benchmark the experience of current postgraduate students. Subject to the outcomes, the department will consider developing a business case for a wider survey of postgraduate research students.

Action 4.2 National guidelines on the development, assessment and recognition of transferable skills

ACGR to develop a set of guidelines that define principles and the rationale of skills development, assessment and recognition, which are not too prescriptive.

Responsibility: ACGR – by end 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

Keynote presentations on transferable skills development and recognition were made at the ACGR International Meeting held in Vietnam in November 2017. At this meeting ACGR also heard from international colleagues on their approaches to skills development within graduate research programs.

ACGR members convened a focus session on this deliverable at the ACGR National Meeting on 16 April 2018 to scope the extent of these guidelines and determine an action plan for development. Feedback was received that will form the basis of the guidelines. A working group has been established and this task has been slated as a priority action for June – December 2018.

Next steps

New best practice guidelines will be drafted by the working group. These will then be debated at the next national meeting in Melbourne in November 2018 with the aim that they be finalised and approved by the end of December 2018.

Action 4.3 Refresh Good Practice Principles for Research Supervision

ACGR to refresh the Good Practice Principles for Research Supervision to include increased focus on the development of students' skills and attributes to reflect the aims of contemporary HDR training to equip students with employability skills and experience. (This action also relates to 'Section 3. Equity, including Indigenous participation').

Responsibility: ACGR – by March 2018

Status

Complete

Progress to date

A draft revision to the Supervision section of the Good Practice Principles was prepared for endorsement by the Executive Committee. It was then presented to the membership for approval at the National ACGR meeting in November 2018 and fully endorsed.

The Good Practice Principles for Graduate Research are available at <https://www.ddogs.edu.au/good-practice-principles>.

Next steps

This action is now complete.

Action 4.4 Better address HDR supervision responsibilities in academic performance expectations

ACGR to develop guidelines to support universities to better manage and reward performance at the institutional level, including:

- formal inclusion of monitoring of research supervision performance in performance reviews
- the development of metrics to inform regular performance reviews and other processes such as academic promotion

- clear processes for de-registration of supervisors who consistently fail to meet performance expectations
- reviewing university career structures and academic promotion processes to appropriately recognise industry engagement as well as traditional scholarly outputs.
- reviewing supervision registration processes and levels to appropriately recognise industry engagement as well as traditional scholarly outputs by HDR candidates.

Responsibility: ACGR – by July 2018

Status

Complete

Progress to date

ACGR has convened two forums on this deliverable. The first included a panel discussion at ACGR's international meeting in Vietnam in November 2017, and this was followed by a working session at its national meeting in Adelaide in April 2018 to debate potential inclusions in the guidelines. ACGR has now drafted a set of Good Practice Guidelines on Supervisory Performance which are to be read in association with the Graduate Research Good Practice Principle 5 on Graduate Research Supervision. The draft was circulated for feedback from all members and subsequently refined, and the final draft of the Guidelines was reviewed and endorsed by the Executive Committee in June and has been published on the ACGR website.

The Guidelines for Quality Graduate Research Supervision are available at <https://www.ddogs.edu.au/copy-of-guidelines>

Next steps

This action is now complete.

Priority Issue 5: Data and evidence to better monitor HDR system performance

Action 5.1 Prospective cohort studies

DET to develop a methodology to undertake cohort studies, subject to funding availability, drawing on consultation with relevant experts in the sector who have undertaken such studies.

Responsibility: DET, in consultation with relevant sector experts – by April 2019

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department has an existing cohort analysis methodology used to undertake cohort analyses of domestic bachelor students. The cohort study methodology uses student data from the HEDC to provide an overview of student outcomes four, six and nine years after students commenced a course. More information on this cohort study and the methodology is available at <https://www.education.gov.au/completion-rates-cohort-analyses>.

The department is exploring the use of this methodology to undertake a cohort study of domestic HDR students. Some minor modifications will need to be made to the methodology to ensure that HDR students can be appropriately tracked using student and Commonwealth identification numbers, and to target specific areas of HDR training performance.

The department's cohort study methodology is limited to existing data sets for enrolled and completed students. Given the need to minimise the administrative burden for universities, in the first instance the department is exploring what can be achieved with existing data.

Next steps

The department will further investigate use of the existing cohort analysis methodology, and subject to funding availability, undertake the first HDR cohort analysis by April 2019 in collaboration with sector experts.

Action 5.2 Expanding CHESN reporting

Subject to legislative and other implementation requirements, extend mandatory CHESN reporting to international HDR students receiving support under the RTP, and encourage universities to also collect and report CHESNs for all HDR students not supported through the RTP.

Responsibility: DET – by end 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

The department is working to introduce appropriate identifiers for monitoring the progression of HDR students. The department is currently in the process of progressing a major overhaul of how information is collected from tertiary education providers. A system to replace the Higher Education Client Assistance Tool (HEPCAT) is scheduled for release on 1 January 2020.

In early 2018, the department released a consultation paper, *Redevelopment and Audit of the Higher Education Data Collection*. This paper included details for the new Transformation of the Collection of Student Information (TCSI), including a proposal considering the introduction of a Unique Student Identifier (USI) for all HDR students receiving government support, including international students.

Next steps

As part of the rollout of the new TCSI, the department will seek to progress regulatory changes to require that unique identifiers be reported for overseas RTP students who receive government support. These changes will be implemented through the USI, if this proposal is progressed. If USIs are not assigned to HDR students, validation changes will be made which make a CHESN mandatory for all HDR students receiving government support.

Action 5.3 Best practice guidelines on tracking HDR students

ACGR to develop guidelines on best practice for universities in tracking HDR students through the system and after they graduate to support better data collection and information on student outcomes by institutions.

Responsibility: ACGR – by end 2018

Status

In progress

Progress to date

ACGR members convened a focus session on this deliverable at the ACGR National Meeting on 16 April 2018 to scope the extent of these guidelines and determine an action plan for their development. A working group has been established and this task has been slated as a priority action for June – December 2018.

Next steps

A discussion paper will be circulated to members for comment in the next month, and new best practice guidelines will be drafted. These will be debated at the next national meeting in Melbourne in November 2018 with the aim that they be finalised and approved by the end of December 2018.