

Advice on the 4th year of HDR candidature

An alert for LES PhDs who are close to, or already in their 4th year of candidature. It is hoped that you will submit your thesis in the coming year and move onto bigger and better things.

However, the 4th year can involve navigating a few additional considerations, especially once your scholarship stops, and you need to face the full force of living costs while trying to write-up.

There are a number of options that are administered by Deakin's GRA, that may help ease the 4th-year of candidature. Hopefully, most of you aware of these options. However, if you are not, please keep them in mind (and *please always consult with your supervisors and read Deakin policy documents to know the rules around these procedures*).

1. **Get more cash!- Apply for an extension of scholarship.** This can give you additional financial support for additional months. However, applications must be well justified to improve your chances of success! (Additional Details/Advice attached).
2. **Get more time to get more cash!- Apply for a change of candidature.** Apply to go from full time to part-time candidature. By moving to part-time, you will slow the candidature clock and allow yourself to gain additional part-time work. (Detail and links below). Indeed, if you are in your 4th year and do not have an extension of scholarship then changing your candidature from full time to part-time is a very sensible option. A cursory glance of 4th-year HDRs still suggests quite a number of you are not using this option. This option is not available to international students (on student visas).
3. **Beyond MCD! Apply for an Extension of candidature.** In some cases, the university will allow candidates to submit their thesis after their 4th year (i.e. Maximum Completion Date). This option is most considered by international students because of their visa and fee implications associated with exceeding candidature. However, clearly, from the University perspective, this is the last resort option and requires stringent justification to be successful. For international students on a fee-waiver, it is important to note you will have to pay ~ \$30K per year (pro-rata) in bench fees if you are over 4 years, even if they get an extension on candidature (as the fee waiver no longer applies).

4. **The Sideways Step: Transfer between research degrees.** Regrettably, for whatever reason time may not be on your side, and if none of the above options is unavailable, then consider a transfer to an MSc. This option, albeit rarely used, may provide an alternative output that is clearly better than a non-completion (Yes this happens more than you think!).

Interested!

All applications can be accessed here in [student online forms](#)

How Are Outcomes Determined?

Once submitted applications are forwarded online for support by the candidate's supervisor and then for initial consideration by the school HDR coordinator. The Faculty Level HDR coordinator (Peter Beech) will also make a faculty level recommendation on approval. However, the final approval on all these options sits with Deakin University's Graduate Research Academy.

Additional Advice on how to apply for an extension of scholarship for LES HDRs

HDR students can experience research-related events beyond their control that can cause significant delays to progress. In such circumstances, it may be appropriate for a candidate, who is an awardee of a scholarship, to apply for a PhD scholarship extension.

Deakin University provides all HDR candidates funded with 3-year scholarships (i.e. DUPR, RTP, AA-Endeavour scholarships) with an opportunity for extension up to a maximum period of 6 months. However, it is a University expectation, where possible, that a PhD is completed within three years of candidature. Hence the onus is on supervisors to be accountable for extension requests, and they must facilitate students to finish within three years. Supervisors should ensure that any project offered to an HDR student be subject to rigorous conceptual development, can be promptly implemented, is adequately resourced and provides reasonable contingency.

Requests for scholarship extension will need to provide demonstrable evidence of unforeseen and extraordinary events outside of the student or supervisory control. This

context contrasts to misadventure type circumstances or routine issues where delays could be avoided through research planning and adequate contingency.

The following conditions are **NOT considered** justifiable for extension of scholarship

- a. A change the to research topic/direction of a chapter that has required extra work;
- b. Analysis (stat/lab/field) of data (e.g. for a chapter) and training to achieve such analysis taking longer than expected;
- c. Addition of research chapters beyond the scope of the initial thesis plan;
- d. Minor delays (< 2 months) incurred due to external (i.e. co-supervisor, industry partner, a colleague at another institute) person taking longer to provide pre-specified resources or training;
- e. Laboratory Mishap: temporary minor equipment failure or break down (<2 months), delays in getting consumables, access to specific machinery slowed down by too many users;
- f. Infield activity: Inclement weather (e.g. heavy bouts of non-flooding rain) that cause short-term delay to sampling/data collection;
- g. "difficulty in data collection" – awardees should plan data collection progressively throughout candidature;
- h. additional costs of data collection, which could have reasonably been foreseen, causing a delay for some reason;
- i. demands on the awardee of other duties within the institution, on or off Campus; problems in working with a supervisor - such matters should be resolved quickly within the School;
- j. Other logistical problems including administrative delays for obtaining permits/permissions relating to research activities.