

GUIDELINES REGARDING ACU STAFF ENROLLING IN HDR DEGREES AT ACU

Introduction

Although ACU staff are encouraged to complete research degrees, it is apparent that problems sometimes arise when a staff member enrolls as an HDR student at ACU.

Such students/staff members are often also the work colleague of their supervisor. This has the potential to cause a conflict of interest for both “student” and supervisor. For instance, some supervisors may find it difficult to manage situations in which their student/colleague is making poor progress; they find it difficult to take appropriate action. Further, any subsequent lack of progress on the part of the student might jeopardise the employment prospects of their student/colleague.

Work-in-progress seminars, confirmation of candidature seminars, or pre-submission seminars may lack objectivity when judging the work of a close colleague. Moreover, Heads of Schools/managers can be compromised in having responsibilities toward the student/staff member and supervisor including issues of confidentiality/privacy. These students not infrequently apply for extensions because of high workloads as an academic staff member which places the ADR in a difficult position with respect to the student, the student’s responsibilities as a staff member, and the head/manager’s role in allocating workload.

Some students have applied for extensive amounts of sick leave (with supporting medical documentation) but continue in their duties as a staff member. This is not appropriate. Any conflict or breakdown in the supervisory relationship affects the workplace more broadly and can cause division within the work unit. Very often, the “student” has limited options for changing supervisors as there is rarely sufficient depth within the unit to provide an alternative supervisor in a cognate area.

The recommendations below apply only to full-time and contract staff, but not to sessional staff.

Recommendations

1. It is preferable that ACU staff enrol in HDR programs outside ACU.
2. On application to an ACU HDR program, the ACU staff member will meet with the ADR who will counsel the staff member with respect to #1 above, the potential challenges of being supervised by a colleague, the feasibility of pursuing their topic of interest at ACU, potential conflicts of interest, and roles/responsibilities in relation to being a student as well as a member of staff.
3. The supervisors of a student/staff member must not
 - o be the line manager of the candidate
 - o be a colleague on the same campus, where at all possible.
4. All candidature matters are the responsibility of the student, supervisors and ADR, not the line manager.
5. It is not acceptable for a student/staff member to apply for sick leave as a HDR student, but not to take sick leave from the workplace.

6. All HDR regulations will apply to the student without favour or exemption due to their employment at ACU.
7. The ADR should vary formal review panels (e.g., confirmation, work-in-progress, pre-submission) to ensure greater objectivity and the minimisation of any potential conflicts of interest. HDR Regulations will reflect this.