PHD@JCU
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JCU plans to introduce a revised PhD program from 2014 to enhance the experience and improve the career prospects of a range of students:

- candidates who seek an enriched study program that will allow them to complete in a timely manner and improve their career prospects
- international candidates who require additional support in order to complete their studies
- domestic and international candidates students who are embarking on cross-disciplinary studies
- candidates who have skills deficits in one or more areas; and
- candidates from non-traditional backgrounds or from industry who are returning to study after a gap.

The revision is designed to:

- enable candidates from a range of educational backgrounds to get off to a strong start
- provide diverse pathways into doctoral study by developing a suite of appropriate courses
- base course choice on individual needs
- increase quality control of coursework and supervision
- enhance the existing structured framework to assist timely completion
- offer appropriate prior-learning credit, especially if a two-year Masters by Research is introduced
- prepare candidates for a variety of professional careers
- ensure an enriched experience
- provide appropriate exit options.

The major feature of this reform is formalising the requirements for the initial 12-18 months of the PhD with the following objectives:

1. To enable the candidate to get their research off to a strong start by:
   
   a. ensuring that the research project is of a suitable scope and standard and can be completed in a timely manner;
   b. ensuring that the candidate has appropriate knowledge of the scholarly literature relevant to the research project;
   c. providing the candidate with the opportunity to further develop their academic knowledge and the skills required to enable them to complete the thesis in a timely manner;
   d. increasing the likelihood that the Confirmation of Candidature is completed on time.

2. To provide the candidate with the opportunity to develop transferable skills required to complete their research and foster their career aspirations in the context of the university’s strategic intent.

3. To better enable the Confirmation of Candidature to be a defined exit point with an integrated pathway to other research higher degrees or postgraduate coursework options in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

It is proposed that each candidate will undertake four subjects in the first 12-18 months of their degree from 2014. Each subject will be worth 3 credit points (one eighth of a years’ work). Students who pass
the graded subjects but not at the required level may be offered credit to a Graduate Certificate/Diploma of Research Methods, Coursework Masters degree.

1. **Confirmation of Candidature will comprise two graded subjects to be completed in the first 12 months FTE:**

   (1) **Developing the Research Plan**

   | Objectives | 1. To ensure that the research project is of a suitable scope and standard and can be completed in a timely manner;  
   |            | 2. To provide the candidate with the opportunity to enhance their written and oral communication skills. |

   | Content    | (1) 2000 word research proposal  
   |            | (2) Proposal seminar  
   |            | (3) Ethics Application (where applicable) |

   and (2) **Situating the Research**

   | Objectives | (1) To ensure that the candidate has appropriate knowledge of the scholarly literature relevant to the research project.  
   |            | (2) To develop the candidate’s skills in written communication, critical thinking and knowledge synthesis. |

   | Content    | Written work appropriate to field of research as stipulated by Faculty/School/Discipline in accordance with university guidelines |

2. **The Transferrable Skills Program will be offered as an ungraded subject comprising a series of professional development workshops with core and elective components tailored to the needs of individual students based on a formal needs assessment.**

   | Objective | To provide the candidate with the opportunity to develop generic skills required to complete their research and foster their career aspirations in the context of the university’s strategic intent. |

   | Content    | Two week’s (10 half days) professional development tailored to the candidate’s individual needs and aspirations based on a formal appraisal conducted by the Advisory Panel. The content will comprise attendance at compulsory (Induction, Professional Writing, Ethics, Data Storage and Management, Copyright and Copywrongs, Indigenous Research Protocols; Challenges of the Tropics) and elective workshops offered by the Graduate Research School which will mostly be offered in blocks twice per year and/or Faculty (e.g. cohort programs) and/or other arrangement (e.g. Tropical Network of universities; courses offered by ATN e-grad school). |

3. **Each student will be required to undertake at least one additional subject relevant to their research, usually an advanced research methods subject.** A range of cross-faculty postgraduate advanced Research Methods subjects (e.g. epistemology of research; qualitative and quantitative research design and analysis; academic writing) will be developed in modes accessible to on and off campus candidates. The rights to use online subjects may be purchased if required. Candidates may also elect to take approved subjects/courses offered by other institutions, e.g. ASPRI courses at ANU. If such courses are not assessed, the candidate will be required to enrol in a Special Topic at JCU and will be assessed by a reflective essay on what they have learned and its relevance to their research.

   | Objective | To develop the academic knowledge and/or research skills required to enable the candidate to complete their thesis in a timely manner |

   | Content    | An elective subject based on the candidate’s individual needs and aspirations based on a formal appraisal conducted by the Advisory Panel. |