



# NCIS Procedure for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Enquiries and Applications

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## The NCIS Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Program: Doctor and Master of Philosophy

You can enrol at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) in the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Program to undertake a Doctor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy.

While applications are considered on an ongoing basis, NCIS strongly encourages prospective HDR scholars to commence their program in February at the beginning of the Australian academic year.

A **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** is a supervised research degree in which you carry out independent research on a topic developed by you and your supervisor(s). As a PhD scholar, you are required to submit a thesis of up to 100,000 words, which will be an original piece of work incorporating an account of the research done during the program and its results. You may be enrolled as a full-time or part-time scholar. Normally, minimum full-time candidature duration is 2 years (4 years part-time) and maximum full-time candidature duration is 4 years (8 years part-time). You can be based at the ANU or study externally.

A **Master of Philosophy (MPhil)** is a supervised research degree in which you carry out research under the guidance of your supervisor. As an MPhil scholar, you are required to submit a thesis of up to 60,000 words. Normally, minimum full-time candidature is of 1 year duration and maximum full-time candidature is 2 years' duration. This time period is doubled for part-time candidature.

You can undertake the HDR Program based at the ANU or study externally. The NCIS preference is for its HDR scholars to be based at the ANU.

The Centre's HDR Program includes several elements of mandatory coursework including: ethics training, research integrity training, and attendance at the annual Research Methods Lab (March/April) and the Graduate Research and Writing Retreats (October). HDR scholars must also

complete a series of milestones during their program related to Annual Thesis Report/Planning, a Thesis Proposal Review and Thesis Seminar presentations.

## NCIS – Exploring Your Options to Apply

The NCIS has a rigorous application process, and pays particular attention to supporting the development of a high-quality thesis proposal.

Your application to NCIS will be assessed based on whether:

- 1) your previous **academic qualifications and other relevant experience** has provided you with the research skills and motivation necessary to complete a graduate research program;
- 2) your **research proposal** is appropriate for a graduate research program and aligns with NCIS research themes; and
- 3) the NCIS can provide **supervision** for your chosen topic.

The NCIS's internal application process involves submitting an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** which is considered by the Centre's HDR Committee and the Director, Professor Mick Dodson. That process precedes, and links into, the wider ANU enrolment procedure. You must be accepted for enrolment at the ANU in order to participate in the NCIS HDR Program.

In the lead-up to submitting a formal **Expression of Interest** to the NCIS, and an **Application for Enrolment** to the ANU, staff at the NCIS can assist you to explore your options and fine-tune your ideas for a thesis proposal.

### Step 1: Check your Eligibility

To be eligible to pursue a Higher Degree by Research at NCIS, you should:

- have an Australian university **honours degree** (at the level honours 2A or above); **OR**
- have **equivalent prior studies** in Australia or elsewhere (for example a Bachelor's Degree plus a Graduate Diploma, or a Master's degree) that includes some research work; **OR**
- have **professional qualifications, work experience and/or published research** that may be deemed equivalent to the Honours Degree; **AND**
- have met the [English language requirements](#) (if you are an international student).

If you are unsure about whether or not you meet the minimum requirements, or have general questions about the HDR Program, please read the NCIS *Candidate Guide* available at: <http://ncis.anu.edu.au/study/> and then email or phone the HDR Program Manager on 02-61250160.

## Step 2: Explore your Options

At the NCIS we pride ourselves on having an interdisciplinary research environment which values diverse and innovative approaches and the dialogue this sparks amongst our staff, visiting researchers and HDR scholars. Please look through the NCIS website to see the Centre's broad research themes and the type of projects currently being carried out by academic researchers and HDR scholars at <http://ncis.anu.edu.au>.

At the NCIS, HDR scholars undertaking either a PhD or MPhil have a Chair (responsible for administrative matters), a Primary Supervisor (for major research matters), and Associate Supervisors (for particular expertise). Supervision panels consist of a minimum of 3 members for PhD, 2 for MPhil.

The Chair of NCIS supervision panels are typically made up of experienced professors and mid-career researchers working in the field of interest to the HDR scholar. The Chair and the Primary Supervisor *may* be the same people. The Chair **must** be from NCIS, your Primary Supervisor **must** be at the ANU, and your Associate Supervisors can be based at other universities or work outside the tertiary sector.

You can discuss your supervision needs and options with NCIS staff and the HDR Program Manager.

## Step 3: Develop a preliminary Thesis Proposal

If you are interested in pursuing a research degree at NCIS, discuss your area of interest with the HDR Program Manager and NCIS staff. At this stage you will need to draft a written **Thesis Proposal**. This sets out the case for your research idea and how you wish to achieve it.

The Thesis Proposal lays the groundwork for your future research. It helps you to think through your intended project from beginning to end, alerts you to potential challenges in carrying it, and makes you think about the broad plan of work that will be needed and how you will do it.

Your research topic and methodology will continue to develop throughout your HDR Program, but your initial proposal must persuade the NCIS that you:

- have a good understanding of the topic background and the research question/s you intend to address;

- can demonstrate the originality and need for the research, and how your work will fill that need; and
- have the motivation and capability to carry the work through to completion.

NCIS staff can provide you with advice and feedback on ways to develop your ideas into a written Thesis Proposal to submit as part of your EOI.

This phase may include the need for you to visit the Centre or connect via Skype, to discuss your Thesis Proposal with staff.

To assist applicants at this stage, the NCIS has prepared a guide to [Writing a Thesis Proposal](#)

See also the ANU's *Academic Skills and Learning Centre* webpage on writing a research proposal at: <https://academicskills.anu.edu.au/resources/handouts/research-proposals>

#### Step 4: Express your Interest

To commence the more formal process, you must electronically submit an **Expression of Interest** (EOI) to the HDR Program Manager ([ncis.hdr.program@anu.edu.au](mailto:ncis.hdr.program@anu.edu.au)).

Your EOI consists of the following documents:

1. Completed [Expression of Interest Form](#) (PDF)
2. [A Thesis Proposal](#) (5-10 pages)
3. Curriculum vitae (CV)
4. Academic transcripts
5. IELTS/TOEFL results (if applicable)
6. A sample of your writing (eg; an article, report or paper) that has a research issue or component to it.

#### Step 5: NCIS considers your EOI

The NCIS convenes a HDR Committee every two months and considers **Expressions of Interest** from potential candidates wanting to enrol in a Higher Degree Research Thesis at the Centre.

To meet NCIS procedures and ANU application deadlines, prospective candidates should express their interest in the NCIS Graduate Program **at least three months in advance of the major university PhD/MPhil application deadline; that is, 3 months before October each year.**

The Committee makes recommendations to the Delegated Authority, the Director of the NCIS, who makes the final decision on whether a candidate will be accepted into the NCIS HDR Program.

At this stage, you will be asked to attend (in person or by skype) a HDR Committee meeting at the NCIS in order to speak to your Thesis Research Proposal.

The HDR Program Manager will inform you within two weeks of the HDR Committee meeting whether your proposal has been conditionally approved or not, and if there is a supervisor interested in your application.

At this stage, the NCIS approval is *conditional and without prejudice* because each prospective candidate must make a formal application to the ANU for enrolment as a HDR scholar. If a candidate fails to be accepted by the ANU, they cannot be accepted into an NCIS program.

### **Step 6: Make a formal application to the ANU**

For entry into the NCIS HDR Program you must make a formal application to enrol at the ANU via the [ANU online application process](#). The NCIS PhD program code is 9350, and the MPhil program code is 8350.

For further information and advice, see the [ANU Graduate Research Handbook](#).

### **Step 7: Enrol and Commencement**

Once you have been accepted for enrolment by the ANU, and if you have been offered a provisional place in the NCIS HDR Program, you will be sent a formal Letter of Offer confirming that.

While the NCIS accepts Expressions of Interest throughout the year, we strongly encourage prospective HDR scholars to commence their program at the beginning of the Australian academic year in February. Candidates wanting to commence their program later in the academic year must make a written case for that to the Director of the NCIS, Professor Dodson, and receive approval.