

# Research Start Guide

ECU's Higher Degrees by Research courses:

**Doctor of Philosophy PhD - L61**

**Doctor of Philosophy Integrated PhD (Integrated) - J42**

**Masters by Research in a number of disciplines**

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## Check your dates

Most of ECU's research courses have specific start dates and application deadlines. However, applications for the PhD are open all year round. ECU's Research Scholarships also have opening and closing dates. You can find many of these dates on our [Scholarships website](#).

Make sure you know the closing dates for all of your applications. We recommend you complete your application four to six weeks in advance of any deadline.

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## Know your topic

Once you've familiarised yourself with the important dates you can prepare a 300-word abstract and a two-page proposal on your topic. It's in your best interests to understand and reflect on ECU's research strengths in your proposal.

If you commence with us, your proposal is likely to change, in consultation with your supervisor. The initial abstract and proposal tells us about you, including how much you know about ECU, research in your area of study, how passionate you are about your subject, and how familiar you are with the prospective supervisor in the School. To find out more about our research strengths and our staff, download one of our school research guides.

[Arts & Humanities](#)  
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 [Science](#)  
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## Prepare your documents

Unless you're an ECU Alumni, we'll need all of your transcripts, your CV and (potentially) copies of your Honours or Masters Thesis, publications and evidence of English competency. An incomplete application will be delayed, and you may not meet the required deadlines. Make sure each of your documents have your full name and contact details on them.

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## Apply directly to ECU

Visit the [Online Application Portal](#) to apply for your course, including uploading your documents. You can also track the progress of your application here. We'll communicate via your email address. It's important that you check your emails regularly so that your application is not delayed. This includes your spam and junk folders regularly in case emails from us end up there.

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## Wait for your initial assessment

We'll take an initial look at your qualifications, your topic and our research strength and capacity. This can take four to six weeks, depending on academic availability. During December and January this process may take longer. We'll inform you of the outcome of your application via email.

If you have any questions, please email [Admissions@ecu.edu.au](mailto:Admissions@ecu.edu.au).

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## Progress your application

If your application has progressed for further assessment, we may ask you for more information. At this stage your qualifications will be verified and a supervisor will be assigned to you. Processing time for the assessment of your application will vary based on academic availability, however, we advise that you leave four weeks for this stage and potentially more during December and January.

If you have any questions email [Admissions@ecu.edu.au](mailto:Admissions@ecu.edu.au).

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## Outcome of your application

At this second stage, your application may still be declined if we cannot find a suitable supervisor or if we believe your qualifications aren't sufficiently competitive. However, if you're successful, you can then progress to accepting your offer or applying for a scholarship.

### Read everything.

Please read all correspondence from the University carefully. Make sure you're aware of all key dates. HDR processes take time, so it's very important to apply early, with a complete application.

### Email is a great way to get more information.

Generally speaking, it's best to email the University rather than telephoning about your application. Specialist staff aren't always available by phone, but an email from you will get an answer in writing that you can refer to at a later date.

ECU will usually get back to you within two working days of an email request. Please direct your emails to one area only, as copying in more than one area will create delays in responding to you. If you email the wrong area we will redirect the email for you.

If you are considering studying a Research Degree at ECU, please email [StudyECU@ecu.edu.au](mailto:StudyECU@ecu.edu.au).

If you have already applied and have any queries regarding your application, please email [Admissions@ecu.edu.au](mailto:Admissions@ecu.edu.au).

# Research Start Guide

## Applying for a Masters by Research or PhD

If you're applying for a research degree, there are special conditions to meet.

To apply for a research degree, please supply the following with your application:

- a 300-word research abstract and a 2-page research proposal (read our guide to writing a proposal);
- information about your work, academic history and qualifications; and
- references from any publications or conference papers you've co-authored (read our guide to documenting your research experience).

## Guide to writing a research proposal

The purpose of the two-page research proposal is to guide ECU's Schools in determining whether the project:

- aligns to the research areas of the School;
- can be matched with expertise within the School;
- is an appropriate scope and level for the degree being applied for;
- is and is likely to contribute to new knowledge and have impact; and
- can be resourced, and the infrastructure and support required to complete it are available.

You may consult with a member of academic staff on developing the proposal, however the proposal must be written and referenced by you.

A proposal should be a maximum of two pages in length. There is no set template for writing a proposal, but it should include, as a guide:

1. Project Title
2. Project Summary and alignment to the research areas of the School
  - a. What is it you intend to investigate?
  - b. Describe how the proposed research project links to research in the School. Please see the Research Start Guide on the reverse of this page to find out more about research activities run by our Schools.
3. Project Aims, Significance and Impact
  - a. Provide context/background to the project via a short review of existing literature.
  - b. Outline the research problem/research questions/hypotheses.
  - c. What do you think will be the main contribution to new knowledge?
  - d. Why is this important? Are there possible societal, economic or other beneficiaries to the proposed research?
4. Broad/brief outline of methodology
  - a. General research approach (e.g. qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, creative practice)
  - b. Data collection and analysis
  - c. Theoretical frameworks (if applicable)
5. Other factors for consideration (if applicable)
  - a. Special resources (e.g. specialist software, equipment)
  - b. Ethical considerations
  - c. Field work

## Documenting your Research Experience

Your research experience will be taken into consideration when we assess your application for a research course. Please supply information about any research grants you have received and/or any research you have published. If you are waiting on confirmation of publication of journal article(s), book(s), manuscript(s), etc., you should include it on your CV and list of publications, noting that confirmation of publication is pending.

Learn more about [documenting your research](#).