Graduate Research School

The University Of Queensland
AUSTRALIA

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Placement Program

Partner with UQ research talent to explore opportunities, address real-world challenges and deliver research-informed outcomes.





How HDR placements work

UQ HDR placements connect PhD and MPhil candidates with industry, government and community organisations through structured, project-based learning experiences.

Candidates bring advanced research capabilities, disciplinary expertise and new perspectives to a defined project of value to the host organisation. Each placement is developed collaboratively by the host, the HDR candidate and the candidate's UQ advisor, with **clear objectives, deliverables, supervision arrangements and start and end dates.**

Placements may be undertaken on a **full-time or part-time basis**. Candidates are **not employees** and should not undertake routine operational duties or work critical to the organisation's day-to-day operations. Instead, placements should provide a meaningful professional learning experience while delivering achievable outcomes for the host.

The placement duration is determined by the project scope and the needs of the host and candidate. Where funding is linked to placement participation, a minimum duration of 60 working days, excluding public holidays, may apply.

What host organisations gain

Hosting an HDR placement provides access to advanced research skills and specialist expertise that can help your organisation investigate an issue, test an idea or progress a defined project.

Potential benefits include:

- evidence-based insights to support informed planning and strategic decision-making.
- specialist research, analytical and problem-solving capabilities to address complex challenges.
- fresh perspectives on organisational challenges, opportunities and emerging priorities.
- a defined project outcome, resource, analysis or practical recommendation for your organisation.
- opportunities for staff to further develop mentoring and supervisory capabilities.
- early engagement with highly skilled research talent who may become future employees, collaborators or partners.

HDR placements enable candidates to apply their research in a professional environment while developing transferable skills. They also strengthen partnerships between UQ and external organisations through collaboration, knowledge exchange and impact.

Host organisation responsibilities

Host organisations play an important role in creating a productive, well-supported and mutually beneficial placement experience.

Hosts are expected to:

• collaborate with the HDR candidate and UQ advisor to define the project scope, activities, expected outputs and learning objectives.
• agree on a realistic placement duration and schedule that meet the needs of the project and candidate.
• ensure the project is valuable to the organisation but is not critical to core business operations.
• provide access to the workplace, information, systems, equipment and other resources reasonably required to undertake the project.
• provide an appropriate induction, including relevant workplace health, safety, security and confidentiality requirements.
• nominate a host supervisor or mentor who is available to guide and support the candidate.
• schedule regular check-ins with the candidate.
• provide timely guidance and feedback on the candidate's work and project outputs.
• review the final report, deliverable or other project outcome identified in the project brief.

What makes a strong placement?

A successful HDR placement is:

• **Project-based**: focused on a clearly defined question, challenge or opportunity.

• **Achievable**: supported by a realistic scope, timeframe and set of deliverables.

• **Research-informed**: drawing on the candidate's advanced research capabilities and disciplinary expertise.

• **Well-supported**: with appropriate supervision, resources, access and regular feedback.

• **Developmental**: providing meaningful professional learning rather than routine operational work.

• **Mutually beneficial**: creating identifiable value for both the host organisation and the HDR candidate.

Agreement, intellectual property and confidentiality

An industry placement agreement must be established to facilitate the placement. This agreement is distinct from any existing research agreements that may be in place between your organisation and the University of Queensland (UQ).

UQ has standard template agreements, developed by UQ's Legal Services Division, which will be provided during the planning process. Where appropriate, UQ may also consider using a host organisation's industry placement agreement template.

HDR candidates are required to enter into intellectual property and confidentiality arrangements with UQ, which extend to their placement activities. As part of this, candidates are expected to maintain the confidentiality of any information provided by the host organisation that is identified as confidential.

Under UQ's standard industry placement agreement, intellectual property created during the placement is typically owned by the host organisation, unless otherwise agreed.

While placements are often aligned with the candidate's area of research, the project is generally separate from the research thesis due to the confidential nature of the work. Where there is a need for placement activities or outcomes to contribute to the thesis, this can be considered on a case-by-case basis and would require appropriate additional agreements to be established.

Insurance

The University provides insurance coverage for HDR candidates undertaking unpaid placements.

This includes:

- **Public Liability insurance (AUD $20 million)**
- **Professional Indemnity insurance (AUD $20 million)**
- **Personal Accident insurance**
- **Travel insurance (where applicable)**

Host organisations are expected to maintain insurance coverage appropriate to the placement. Any specific coverage requirements will be confirmed during the planning process and documented in the placement agreement.

A placement must not commence until the required agreement and insurance arrangements have been confirmed.

Types of placement projects

Projects are designed to address real organisational challenges.

HDR candidates may contribute to a range of defined projects, including evidence reviews, data analysis and modelling, program evaluation, stakeholder research, investigation of emerging issues or opportunities, framework or prototype development, process improvement and evidence-based recommendations.

Projects are tailored to organisational needs and the candidate's expertise.

Research. Partnership. Impact.

Meaningful partnerships transform research expertise into practical opportunities.

HDR placements connect organisations with emerging research talent, support evidence-informed innovation and help develop career-ready researchers with experience beyond academia.

A well-designed placement can deliver immediate value through a defined project while also creating opportunities for future employment, research collaboration and longer-term engagement with UQ.

Next steps

A successful HDR placement begins with careful planning and clear expectations.

1. Discuss the opportunity

If your organisation is already connected with an HDR candidate, discuss the placement with the candidate and their UQ advisor. If you have a project idea but have not identified a suitable candidate, contact the Graduate Research School.

2. Develop the project brief

The host organisation, HDR candidate and UQ advisor work together to develop a project brief.

3. UQ reviews the project brief

UQ reviews the project brief to ensure the placement is academically appropriate, aligns with program objectives, is achievable within the proposed timeframe, and provides mutual benefit to the candidate and host organisation.

4. Finalise the placement agreement

Before the placement commences, UQ and the host organisation will finalise an industry placement agreement covering intellectual property, confidentiality, insurance, workplace health and safety, placement dates and supervision.

5. Commence and support the placement

Once UQ confirms that the project brief has been approved and the required agreement is in place, the placement can commence. The host supervisor provides regular guidance and feedback throughout the placement, supported by the candidate's UQ advisor.

6. Complete the placement evaluation

At the conclusion of the placement, the host reviews the agreed project outputs and completes an evaluation of the candidate. As the placement is an assessable professional learning activity, the host's feedback is an essential component of the program.

Ready to explore an HDR placement?

Whether your organisation has a clearly defined project, an early-stage idea or an interest in connecting with UQ research talent, the Graduate Research School can help.

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