



Melbourne College of Divinity

Higher Degrees by Research Leave of Absence and Lapse of Candidature Policy

The following policy applies to all Higher Degree by Research Students of the MCD, with the exception of holders of Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAs) and International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (IPRS), who are dealt with separately under Section 1.6.

Leave of Absence (LOA) may be granted for sickness, family or carer responsibilities, or for other reasons which prevent the candidate carrying out research. Candidates are not expected to continue working on their research program during any period of leave of absence.

1. Leave of Absence

1.1 Standard Provisions

Standard Leave of Absence provisions for domestic HDR students at the MCD will be for a maximum of **12 months** of leave over the course of the entire candidature. Leave will not normally be approved before the end of the first semester or in the last six months of candidature. Only in exceptional circumstances will a single 12-month period of leave be granted. In other exceptional circumstances, there may be provision for a further period of leave, but not exceeding 24 months in total. While the Research Committee will deal sympathetically with requests for leave, candidates are expected to regard the completion of their degree as a major priority throughout their candidature.

1.2 Maternity Leave

Students may be granted maternity leave for a period of up to 12 months. This leave should be arranged in advance of commencement of the leave with a doctor's certificate attached to a leave request form. Maternity leave is a separate entitlement to other requests for leave of absence and will not diminish the entitlement or compromise a candidate's application for other leave. Any period of approved maternity leave will be reflected in a variation to the end-date of candidature.

1.3 Parental Leave

Candidates who are partners of women giving birth are entitled to parental leave up to a period of 12 months. Parental leave is a separate leave entitlement and will not diminish or compromise a candidate's application for other leave. Any period of approved parental leave will be reflected in a variation to the end-date of candidature. Parental leave should normally be taken within one week of the expected date of birth of the child and should conclude no later than 12 months after the commencement of leave.

1.4 Jury Leave

Candidates empanelled for jury service for a period longer than five days have an entitlement of up to 12 weeks leave for jury duty. Jury leave does not diminish other leave entitlements. Any period of approved jury leave will be reflected in a variation to the end-date of candidature. Applications should be accompanied by a statement from the Office of the Juries Commissioner (OJC) that specifies the number of days and period when the candidate was a member of the jury (this information is provided on the payment slip prepared by the OJC).

The MCD requires a request for jury leave to be made before the candidate has been empanelled, but recognises that a statement indicating the length of jury service, and therefore the length of time for which leave is required, will not be available until after the jury service is over.

It is recommended that all candidates discuss with their supervisor the implications for their candidature of taking such leave before accepting a call for jury service. If jury service is likely to cause significant interruption to a candidate's research, the candidate may seek to have jury service deferred. This, however, will be a decision taken by the Office of the Juries Commissioner, and not by the MCD.

1.5 Emergency Services Leave

Candidates who are volunteers with one of the emergency services organisations (e.g. Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, etc...) may be granted up to 4 weeks leave for service with that organisation during periods of extreme weather conditions. Emergency services leave is a separate leave entitlement and will not diminish or compromise a candidate's application for other leave. On application, leave will be granted for up to 4 weeks, provided that:

- the services of the candidate are actually required by the voluntary emergency relief organisation of which the candidate is a member.

It is recommended that, wherever possible, all candidates discuss with their supervisor the implications for their candidature of taking such leave before accepting a call for emergency services leave.

Evidence that the candidate is required must be provided before leave can be considered, and evidence that the candidate participated in emergency operations must be provided following the return to study.

1.6 APA and IPRS Students

Holders of APAs are entitled to leave as determined by Section 2.25.20 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003 - Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2010*.

IPRS students are not entitled to leave as such, but may apply to the MCD for a suspension of their IPRS, as determined by Section 3.25.5 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003 - Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Research) 2010*.

2. Lapse of Candidature in Good Standing

Candidates who have exhausted their standard leave provisions and/or who are ineligible for a further extension to their candidature should not apply for more leave of absence, but apply **to lapse their candidature in good standing**.

Candidates who have *either*: i). not been able to submit a thesis by the end of their normal period of candidature plus allowable extensions; *or* ii). have exhausted all standard leaves of absence provisions and are still unable to return to study, may apply to lapse their candidature 'in good standing'. Separate provisions apply to students in each of these two categories.

2.1 Lapse of Candidature – Exhaustion of Candidature

Candidates who have been unable to submit a thesis by the end of their normal period of candidature (plus allowable extensions), will not be withdrawn from their course of study, but will be marked 'incomplete'. Such candidates may not remain lapsed indefinitely, but must submit their thesis for examination **within two years** of the lapsed date. Lapsed candidature will be dated effective from the expected thesis submission date (adjusted for any approved periods of leave or extensions of candidature that have already been used). Lapsed candidates are not automatically entitled to library facilities or to supervision. Continuation of supervision will be by negotiation with the supervisor and research coordinator of the relevant RTI, **but no** such supervision for lapsed candidates will be paid for by the MCD.

2.2 Lapse of Candidature – Exhaustion of Leave Provisions

Candidates who have exhausted all standard leave of absence provisions but are still unable to return to study, will be lapsed in good standing, but may apply for re-admission to the same project without prejudice at any time up to two years from the date of the lapse of candidature. Candidates wishing to return to the same project between two and five years after the lapse of candidature may apply for re-admission, but will be required to attend an approval or confirmation panel, even if such a panel had been held prior to the candidate's lapse of candidature. Candidates wishing to return to study more than five years after the lapse of candidature will need to submit a completely new application for admission. Each such application will be treated on its own merits, with no reference to previous candidature history. However, the applicant may request credit or recognition of prior learning on the basis of work done in the previous candidature. Any requests for such credit must be taken to the Research Committee.

3. International Students

International HDR students must refer to the 'Deferral of Study for International Students' policy, and seek advice from the MCD International Students' Officer. Under government regulations, there are visa implications if an international student is not enrolled on a full-time basis.