1 Overview

1.1 Summary

In 1997, the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) published the *Model Code For The Conduct Of Postgraduate Research and Statement of Minimum Resources*.¹ This was followed in 1998 by *A Strategy Guide to Postgraduate Supervision including the 1998 Model Code for the Conduct of Postgraduate Research and Statement of Minimum Resources*.² A revised statement was again published in 2004.³

CAPA’s minimum resource standards have proven to be an extremely successful initiative in providing universities with a reasonable guide for the provision of resources for postgraduates. CAPA’s minimum resource statements are informed by the assumption that the provision of adequate resources is vital to the effective delivery of postgraduate programs, and for the production and dissemination of quality research. Many universities now have effective measures in place to support students with the costs and resources for research, based on a consistent, transparent, institution-wide policy.

32 of 38 institutions evaluated now have minimum resource policies or statements in place. This in itself marks a significant achievement for CAPA and its efforts in support of postgraduates. The number of policies in place now provides the opportunity to begin benchmarking minimum standards in resources for postgraduate study, and to identify and promote examples of best practice.

A summary table of findings for this report is included as Appendix III. The table outlines features of minimum resource policies, and the kind of undertakings made in support of minimum standards of resources for postgraduate study.

This report includes an invitation for feedback, both from institutions and individuals, on the standards outlined in CAPA’s *Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study*, along with those addressed in this report.⁴ Feedback will assist in the ongoing development of CAPA’s minimum resource standards, and also allow institutions the opportunity to offer correction or clarification on the standards identified where needed.

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⁴ Included here under section 5.
1.2 Advice for current and prospective postgraduates

It is important to emphasise that the aim of this discussion paper is to review the *policies* in place to help assure institution-wide minimum resource standards for postgraduate study. It is not intended as a guide to the actual resources and facilities in place at particular institutions, nor their quality or the levels of investment committed to sustain them. Evaluating the compliance of institutions with their own policies and guidelines is beyond the scope of this paper. The actual resources available in support of postgraduate study will vary significantly between schools, departments and faculties both within and between institutions. It is important therefore that postgraduates obtain a realistic assessment of the resources available in the academic units relevant to them, and their “fit” with the anticipated resource needs for study in each individual case. Where detailed and unambiguous minimum resource standards are in place (and adhered to), this should be a straightforward and constructive exercise.
2 A Review of minimum resource standards for postgraduate study

2.1 Overview

The aim of this report is to assist higher education providers, student organisations and students in promoting quality and seeking continuous improvements in services and support for postgraduates, in particular in the area of minimum resources for postgraduate study. This initiative is informed by a range of current and emerging issues in higher education, including:

- the development of an indicator framework for performance-based funding for Australian higher education providers;
- establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA);
- the development of a national Research Workforce Strategy by the Federal Government;
- measures to restore quality and sustainability to the provision of student services and representation; and
- the decline in quality, standards and levels of access to services and representation for postgraduate students in particular.

This report builds on findings from The Research Education Experience in 2009 Workshop report, and the presentation given by CAPA to the April 2010 meeting of the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDoGS) hosted at the 2010 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference (QPR). It is also informed by the Postgraduate Services and Representation pilot study conducted in 2009. This paper follows the Toward Best Practice Services and Representation for Postgraduates Discussion Paper of April 2010.

This report reviews the impact of CAPA’s previous efforts in promoting the adoption of minimum resource standard policies by higher education providers, and to facilitate continued development in this area. This report focuses on facilities and resources that are provided by higher education providers. These aspects of the postgraduate experience form part of a broader range of factors, many of which inform the preferences of prospective postgraduate students.

Despite CAPA’s best efforts in each iteration of its published standards, reports and public submissions, the focus of institutions to date in this area has been almost exclusively around minimum standards for full time, internal, research higher degree students. Regardless, this paper also includes for consideration resource standards for part time, distance and external research students and coursework higher degree students.

8 In contrast to Toward Best Practice Services and Representation for Postgraduates (Ibid.) which focussed on the services and representation typically provided by postgraduate representative organisations.
2.2 Aspects of a quality postgraduate experience

As noted in *Toward Best Practice Services and Representation for Postgraduates*, there are many ways of conceiving what a quality postgraduate experience might look like. For research students in particular, some insight may be gained from *The Research Education Experience in 2009* workshop report, which highlighted the following key themes:9

- Supervision
- Resources
- Skills and professional development
- A collegial research environment
- Various forms of support

Each of these are important aspects of the postgraduate experience, and most are already at a very high standard at many institutions. However, when it comes to opportunities for improvement in each of these areas, the resources available to monitor performance and promote best practice vary.

2.2.1 Minimum resources for postgraduate study

The Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations has developed guidelines for the minimum resources for research postgraduate study - 2004 Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study. The 2004 CAPA standards are now widely adopted across Australian universities, and are widely accepted as codifying the base level of access to facilities and infrastructure to support postgraduate research students.

Background to Victoria University’s *Postgraduate Research Student Facilities and Infrastructure Support Policy*10

The successive releases of CAPA’s statements of minimum resources have been in effect a benchmarking exercise for the minimum resource standards for postgraduate study.11 This exercise has been very effective over the years in establishing reasonable standards for resources necessary for the conduct of quality research, and those standards have been widely adopted by providers as the basis for research student resource standards at their institution, and also (in a handful of cases at least) for improvements in resource standards for coursework postgraduates.

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2.3 The importance of adequate standards of resources for postgraduate study

2.3.1 Supporting quality, transparency and continuous improvement

It is vital to ensure adequate support to enable individuals to be able to successfully complete their degree. The quality of university infrastructure is integral to the culture of the university, and the overall student experience. If universities are unable to provide students with adequate work spaces, equipment or other basic facilities, the entire campus culture and student experience suffers.

International students are becoming increasingly concerned with the distribution of the tuition fees they pay. Students frequently question how their fees are being used when they have difficulty accessing basic resources such as printing facilities, study spaces, computer access and lab facilities. Coursework postgraduate students in particular report having to compete for available computers and study spaces on a daily basis, often using stairways and building corridors as improvised working spaces. This scarcity reaches its peak during examination periods. Under-investment in this area poses a serious reputational risk for all Australian higher degree programs.

The provision of adequate resources is vital to the effective delivery of postgraduate programs across all modes of study. The adequate resourcing of all postgraduate students is an important factor in supporting the completion of both research and coursework degrees. In recognition of this, clear and transparent standards for Minimum Resources should be in place for all postgraduates at every higher education institution.

2.3.2 Progress on the part of providers

The University first formally identified the need to develop and implement a statement of minimum resources for RHD students to supplement this suite of procedures [in 2004], and this need was confirmed by the Audit Panel, which found evidence of differing levels of support for students across disciplines. Examples included office space, computing and photocopying facilities and support for conference attendance...

Affirmation 9: AUQA affirms the need for Flinders to implement a statement of minimum resources for research higher degree students as soon as possible.

2006 AUQA Audit Report for Flinders University (p.36).

Minimum resource standards have become a regular feature of audit reports of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Comments in the 2006 Audit Report for Flinders University are typical of those identifying the importance of minimum resource policies in supporting minimum standards in areas like office space, computer and photocopying facilities and support for conference attendance. Flinders (with the support of its local postgraduate association) subsequently responded by putting a well-developed and concise statement of minimum resources in place.

**Recommendation 5:** Given its plans to increase numbers of international higher degree by research (HDR) students, AUQA recommends the University of Adelaide review the implementation of its policies to support HDR students, paying particular attention to the provision of minimum resources...


Recommendations and affirmations in Audit reports have also highlight the difficulty faced by all institutions in seeking to ensure parity of minimum standards for students across disciplines. The 2003 Audit of the University of Adelaide found that where dissatisfaction was expressed among research students, it was “often related to accommodation, access to computers and lack of clarity about what will/will not be provided by the school”. Despite featuring prominently in Adelaide’s action plans for improving quality, problems around minimum resources resurfaced again in Adelaide’s 2008 Audit report, where the Audit Panel concluded that “this policy may not always be observed in regard to space, travel and conference attendance”.

Comments in the 2008 Audit Report for the University of Adelaide also highlight the difficulty in tackling implementation issues where guidelines are inadequate, and the particular importance of assuring adequate standards when it comes to recruiting international research students. This is a consideration in regard to recruiting international research students in particular, not least because of the requirements regarding adequate resources clearly stated in the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act, through standard 14 of the National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students.

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In some areas, there is a need for the University to increase its ability to ensure that policies are being effectively implemented by academic elements across all campuses. An illustration of this is the University statement on the minimum resources to be provided to all RHD students, which is not being met by some schools. Students met by the Audit Panel described highly variable satisfaction with the resources available to them.

**Recommendation 9:** That Griffith University ensure that its policy on the minimum resources to be provided to research by higher degree students be implemented by academic elements across all campuses.


Comments in the 2004 Audit Report for Griffith University highlight the difficulty faced by institutions in ensuring comparable standards of resources institution-wide. They also highlight access to resources as a key factor in overall student satisfaction.\(^\text{18}\)

\[\text{[Prior to 2008] VU has not had any explicit statement of the minimum standards of facilities and infrastructure support it is undertaking to provide to postgraduate research students. A recent survey of schools and students has revealed considerable variability in the level of support currently being provided across schools. This policy has been developed to ensure that there is a level of consistency and transparency in access to facilities and infrastructural support for postgraduate research students and to promote a shared understanding across the university community of the minimum level of expected support and infrastructure required for research students.}\]

Preface to VU's Postgraduate Research Student Facilities and Infrastructure Support Policy.

Aside from highlighting the challenges faced in this area, attention brought by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) to this issue has also made a significant contribution to improvements in minimum resource standards. For example, In its 2006 Audit Report for Victoria University AUQA recommended that VU “provide a statement of minimum resources that addresses physical space among other requirements for study”.\(^\text{19}\) VU responded in 2008 with its Postgraduate Research Student Facilities and Infrastructure Support Policy.\(^\text{20}\) The policy now in place at VU compares very will with those of other universities, and in terms of its clear commitment to minimum standards and consideration for part-time and external candidates should be considered as an example of best practice.

While progress has been made, progress in many cases has been slow. A number of institutions have had minimum resources policies “under development” for some time, and continue to do so. Central Queensland University’s statement of minimum resources for example was said to be “near completion” in 1999\(^\text{21}\), but over 10 years on there is still no evidence of a minimum standards policy in place.

The provision of adequate resources is vital to the effective delivery of postgraduate programs across all modes of study. The adequate resourcing of all postgraduate students is an important factor in supporting the completion of research degrees. In recognition of this, clear and transparent standards for Minimum Resources should be in place for all postgraduates at every higher education institution.
3 Terminology and assumptions

3.1 Minimum standards and examples of best practice

Benchmarking requires an emphasis on systematic means of making comparisons to identify areas that need improvement. It involves continually questioning how processes are performed, seeking out best practices, and implementing new models of operation. Aside from monitoring of CEQ, GDS and Rodski data, some universities make very little use of external points of reference in monitoring their performance and there is a lack of qualitative monitoring in some areas.

From Benchmarking in Australian Higher Education: A Thematic Analysis of AUQA Audit Reports (emphasis added).

Higher education systems should foster an environment which supports innovation and continuous improvement. Rewarding efforts that support innovation, and that maintain high standards of quality, are key elements of a constructive and useful approach to quality assurance.

Benchmarking can assist in establishing minimum standards, in identifying examples of best practice and in supporting systemic approaches to continuous improvement. In this instance, institutions and students can yield significant benefits where benchmarking supports improvements in policies describing minimum resource standards for postgraduate study, and this would also make a positive contribution to the quality of the higher education system overall.

As highlighted in Toward Best Practice Services and Representation for Postgraduates, there are two main dimensions to a robust benchmarking exercise: acknowledging improvements in overall quality through examples of good practice, and paying regard to efforts that ensure acceptable minimum standards across an entire system. Limitations of an over-reliance on best-practice examples alone create incentives to point to specific examples where significant investment has been made, often at the expense of minimum standards in other areas. An over-reliance on minimum standards at the expense of performance indicators emphasises incentives that perhaps do not provide adequate incentives for innovation.

It is also assumed for the purposes of this report that resources policies outline the minimum standards that are to be applied. Most policies will include a disclaimer to this effect. While variations between AOU’s have not been considered as part of this analysis, academic units looking to distinguish themselves through better supporting their postgraduates is clearly beneficial for students, and is certainly encouraged.

3.2 Providers assessed

Providers included for evaluation in this report include all universities in Australia with combined research and coursework postgraduate enrolments of at least 1,000 students in 2008.24

3.3 Benchmark standards

The approach adopted for this report is to establish relevant input indicators that are objectively verifiable wherever possible.

Indicators are selected on the basis that they:

- Be relevant to the quality of the university experience for postgraduates;
- Be cross-discipline and institution-wide;
- Be based on features of the postgraduate university experience that are objectively verifiable (i.e., not be subject to the kind of limitations typical of student satisfaction surveys); and
- Inform and support improvements in the quality of the postgraduate student experience.

Benchmarking for this report is wherever possible based on publicly available information. Contact with university representatives, students and student organisations have been employed in some cases to help arrive at a response on each of the items included here, and to explore opportunities to share examples of best practice. For the most part the information compiled here is based on publicly available information, links to which are provided wherever possible.

The benchmark standards employed for the current report are as follows:

| 5: Best practice standards ( график ) | Sets the standard for this area or activity. Highlights examples which if adopted would significantly improve overall standards. |
| 4: High standards ( график ) | Includes examples which if adopted have the potential to improve overall standards. |
| 3: Benchmark standards ( график ) | Includes examples which if adopted have the potential to lift overall standards to an acceptable level. |
| 2: Improvements needed / information not available ( график ) | Includes examples where improvements are needed in order to meet benchmark standards. |
| 1: Significant improvements needed to meet benchmark standards ( график ) | Includes examples which pose a risk to the overall reputation of Australian higher education in this area, and require significant improvements in order to meet benchmark standards. |

24 A full list of providers assessed appears as Appendix II. Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand also has a good policy in place in its Minimum Resources Agreement for Thesis Students, but this policy was not included for assessment in this report.
3.4 Scoring of items

For the purposes of this report standards are “mapped” against a simple ranking to reflect the clarity and strength of commitment made to students in regard to the institution-wide availability of minimum resources for postgraduate study, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>A clear commitment to full level of access institution-wide</td>
<td>Best practice standards (☆☆☆☆☆)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>A sole-use resource that may be shared</td>
<td>High standards (☆☆☆☆)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Guideline only/unclear (availability will likely vary by dept.)</td>
<td>Benchmark standards (☆☆☆)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified (may be available but not specified in policy)</td>
<td>Improvements needed / information not available (☆☆)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(blank)</td>
<td>No minimum resources policy in place</td>
<td>Significant improvements needed to meet benchmark standards (☆☆)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Y”

“Y” denotes a clear commitment outlined in minimum resources policy or guidelines.

“Shared”

“Shared” denotes a clear undertaking in regard to the availability of sole-use resources, including qualifications to the effect that that they may (in some instances at least) only be available on a shared basis.

“G”

“G” denotes “guideline” undertakings qualified by additional considerations, to the extent that students cannot be assured as to their availability in every reasonable case. These are referred to elsewhere as guidelines that are more “aspirational” than “enforceable.”

“N”

“N” denotes instances where items are not specifically addressed in minimum resources policy or guidelines.

3.5 Weightings

Weightings were given for each of the scored items in this review. All workspace, facilities and resources for full time internal research students were scored and weighted in this report.

Items were given a weighting of 1.0 where they were counted equally with other criteria, 0.5 where they were weighted with less importance, and up to 2.0 for items considered to be of particular importance for postgraduates.

These items, and the weightings attributed to them, are informed by CAPA’s efforts in support of postgraduates for the past 30 years, and in particular by a series of surveys of the interests and needs of postgraduates, including the Postgraduate Services and Representation pilot study conducted in 2009.25

Due to the high degree of variability found, missing criteria and the difficulty in arriving at an objectively verifiable score in many cases, the following items were included with comments only, or were allocated a zero weight:

- QA measures and reporting and compliance provisions;
- Induction and orientation;
- Support for the direct costs of research;
- Resources for part-time, distance and external research students; and
- Resources for coursework postgraduates.

In the case of resources for coursework postgraduates in particular it is regrettable that there were not more on offer to benchmark. In place of weighted scores, detailed comments are included wherever coursework postgraduates were included for consideration.

3.6 Sins of omission

It is important to recognise that noting items as not specifically addressed in this context is not intended as a direct reflection of their availability in practice.

For example, where “IT support” may not be specifically addressed in minimum resources policy or guidelines, it may in fact be widely available, possibly even to a very high standard. The point of the current exercise is to offer an overview of the various features of minimum resource policies that are in place, and the kind of undertakings made in each case.

There will be many instances where academic departments in practice offer way over and above what is stated in their guidelines. The current exercise however deals only with the undertakings institutions make in their minimum resource policies or guidelines, and to that extent only those that apply institution-wide.

It is also important to note that only policies and guidelines specific to minimum resource standards for postgraduate study were reviewed as part of this exercise.26 For example, where opportunities for postgraduates to participate on university committees and decision-making bodies were assured independently of minimum resources undertakings (for example, in university statutes) they were not included for consideration here. In other words, the current review was specific to minimum resources policies and guidelines, and not an audit of each university’s broader regulations, policies or procedures for each of the aspects featured here.

3.7 When is a policy not a policy?

In order to include the maximum number of institutions for consideration, a generous interpretation of what constitutes a policy has been employed for the purposes of this report. While institutions were not rated on the quality or

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26 Minimum resources policies and guidelines were included for examination regardless of where they sat. A range of examples were included for consideration, including stand-alone policies and explicit reference to minimum resource standards that appeared as part of (for example) broader research higher degree policies and procedures.
availability of their policies, comments are included where relevant among notable features in each case. Examples of good practice in this area include those institutions presenting minimum standards in a clear and well presented policy, integrated with the broader policy and procedures framework of the institution, and easily accessible by staff and current and prospective students alike. There were many institutions however with poorly presented policies and guidelines, where they were not publicly available or were difficult to locate, or where they struggled to make any clear undertakings to students, or did so only in rambling or ambiguous terms. Finally there were descriptions and undertakings in regard to resources which did not manage to constitute a policy at all. These have been included for consideration, however it is unlikely they contain undertakings with any practical force.

Students are entitled to know what their entitlements are. Institutions who have not taken reasonable measures to make their minimum resources policy known to their students are considered for the purposes of this study as not having one in place at all, or with guidelines under development. Institutions that do not have a detailed institution-wide statement in place as of September 2010 are recorded in the summary table as a “-” or as “blank”. These providers are still accorded a rating of one star in recognition of the fact that a number of institutions currently have minimum resource guidelines under development.

There were many instances where resources were assured to be of a very high standard in a particular department, faculty, school, institute or research centre (often referred to as an Academic Organisational Unit or “AOU”). While admirable, these examples do not provide any assurance for those enrolled in other academic units across that institution. For that reason, the current analysis excludes any examples that are not institution-wide.

3.8 Aspirational and enforceable standards

Since 1997, a number of institutions have put policies in place related to resources and facilities for postgraduate research students. Some of these policies set institutional minimum standards, while others are merely aspirational.

CAPA’s 2004 Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study.

A central feature of minimum resource standards for postgraduate study is the veracity of undertakings made by institutions in regard to the resources they make available to students institution-wide. These are not so much a matter of truth or falsity as they are of the clarity and enforceability of the undertakings made. Policies were evaluated here on the strength and clarity of the undertakings made. In many cases these were expressed as a clear undertaking made by the institution on agreeing to enrol a candidate.

Many positive goals were outlined in resource standard policies in aspirational terms, in particular for access to resources for groups who are often left out, such as part time or external research students, and coursework postgraduates with a significant research component in their degree.
Cases where services were referred to in resources policies without a clear undertaking as to their availability were taken as guidelines only. Terms like “ideally”, “where possible” or “subject to availability” distinguish policies and guidelines as aspirational as opposed to enforceable. While aspirational policies may offer good guidance in support of instances of best-practice, they offer no assurance as to minimum standards for students across the board.

Many institutions reflect a “trust us” approach when it comes to resources and support for study. In most cases trust may be well placed. Some institutions that commit to levels of support to a “reasonable level,” or express commitments to minimum resource standards in only very vague terms, can in fact be quite generous in their services and support for students. It should also be noted that the vast majority of those involved in graduate studies do so with the very best of intentions for students, and on the whole postgraduate study in Australia is characterised by an environment that is both innovative and supportive.

Poor practice in the area of minimum resources therefore is rarely due to deliberate attempts to mislead or mis-represent what may or may not be available for students. They are instead perhaps a reflection of the challenges faced in seeking to ensure parity in terms of what’s on offer between schools and departments, and in addressing variable levels of enthusiasm for transparency and compliance with policy across institutions. Variable performance in this area also perhaps reflects the challenges faced in ensuring minimum standards in some cases for very large numbers of students.

Noting these challenges, it nevertheless appears that some institutions are better able to assure minimum standards of resources for postgraduate study than others. This report offers a summary of policies in place in order to support a means whereby institutions may benchmark their performance against others, and motivate efforts in support of quality and continuous improvement in this area for all postgraduates.
4 Features of minimum resources policies

Features of minimum resources policies found were grouped under the following headings:\textsuperscript{27}

- Quality assurance provisions (not scored);
- Induction and orientation (not scored);
- Workspace, facilities and resources for research (full time, internal RHD only) (rated);
- Direct costs of research (full time, internal RHD only) (not scored);
- Resource standards for part time, distance or external research postgraduates (not scored); and
- Resource standards for coursework higher degree students with a research component (not scored).

Ideally a summary could be provided detailing workspace, facilities and resources for coursework as well as research postgraduates. Unfortunately standards to this level are only currently available for full time, internal research students. Facilities and resource considerations for coursework postgraduates, and part-time, distance and external research students are only addressed specifically under their relevant headings.

The following sections address each of these headings in detail.

4.1 Quality assurance provisions

Quality assurance measures specific to minimum resource standards is a relatively new innovation for university policy and procedures. Relevant QA provisions found as part of this review have been grouped under the following headings:

- Reporting and compliance provisions;
- Complaints handling provisions;
- Assurance of opportunities for postgraduate participation on relevant university committees; and
- Other notable quality assurance or evaluation measures.

These are outlined in detail under the following headings.

\textsuperscript{27} Outlined in detail in Appendix I.
4.1.1 Reporting and compliance provisions

1.3 Areas that are unable to comply with the provision of the minimum standards in full are required to document annually what additional provision needs to be available or what actions are being taken to comply with the policy. This documentation is to be collected as part of an audit process administered by the Higher Degree Research Committee of the Academic Board and will be included in the budgetary process for the provision of funds to address the needs. This process will be considered as part of UNE’s Quality Assurance and Risk Management processes.

3.1 Each Head of School with current postgraduate students will report six monthly to the Academic Board’s Research Committee regarding compliance with this policy.

3.2 Where there is any area where the School/ Centre/Institute is not complying then the report will include:
   i) A description of the areas of non-compliance and a strategy and timeframe developed to address the areas of non-compliance;
   ii) Any request for support required to bring the School to compliance with the policy; and
   iii) Where compliance cannot be achieved, e.g. due to physical constraints, any request for exemption from compliance with specific provisions.

From Minimum Facilities for UNE Postgraduate Research Students Policy.

Consistency across faculties, schools and departments is a central issue in ensuring minimum resource standards across institutions. Many involved in graduate studies will be familiar with the challenges faced in encouraging local-level compliance with institution-wide guidelines. Given the central role reporting and compliance plays in sustaining adequate minimum standards, it makes sense for relevant provisions to feature as part of minimum resource guidelines.

Only a small number of institutions specify requirements for their schools, departments and research centres to report specifically on their provision of facilities and resources for students. An example of best-practice can be found at the University of New England, which includes clear and detailed reporting and compliance provisions as part of their Minimum Facilities policy (as outlined above).28

4.1.2 Complaints handling provisions

4.1 Any complaint about the facilities being provided for postgraduate students in a particular case shall be addressed, in the first instance, to the Head of the relevant School and, if unresolved, should be forwarded to the Dean of the relevant Faculty who will make the final determination.

From Minimum Facilities for UNE Postgraduate Research Students Policy.

Clarity and transparency are both central to the effective management of resource standards, and this extends to the resolution of complaints or concerns. While in most cases there will be over-arching guidelines that apply to the resolution of student concerns, there were several cases where these were addressed specifically in minimum resources policies, with UNE again coming up with an example of best-practice (as outlined above).

4.1.3 Assurance of opportunities for postgraduate participation on university committees

**Participation in University decision-making and advice arenas**

All formal University committees include student membership. Some specifically have positions for research degree students. In addition there is a position specifically established for a research student member of the Academic Board.

Faculties and departments also include students in membership of their committees. This includes membership of Faculty Boards.

Postgraduate participation in university decision-making forms an important part of the effective management of graduate studies, and an important part of the broader range of university quality assurance activities. While postgraduate participation in university decision-making is often described in broader university governance, policies and procedures, there were several instances where this was also clearly described in minimum resource guidelines, with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) offering an example of best-practice in this area (as outlined above).

4.1.4 Other notable quality assurance or evaluation measures

Each Head of School, through their Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, will report annually to the Higher Degrees by Research Sub-Committee regarding compliance, or problems with compliance, with this policy.

The report by the Head of School (Annual Report Form) will be countersigned by the School’s Postgraduate Liaison Officer and forwarded through the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor to the Higher Degrees by Research Sub-Committee by 31 Dec. each year...

The Higher Degrees by Research Sub-Committee will review and note the percentages of Research Higher Degree Students on each campus who record overall satisfaction with the suitability of resources, facilities and other support in the ‘Postgraduate Research Students Annual Survey on the Quality of Supervision and Academic Support.’

A number of institutions refer in their resource standards to formal review processes of one form or another. Increasingly, institutions are noting that student satisfaction regarding resources will be monitored by means of survey measures. Such measures are most effective where there is also an indication of how these surveys will be used in maintaining and improving standards, and what action is likely to follow. A good example can be found in James Cook University’s Minimum Standard of Resources and Facilities policy.


4.2 Induction, orientation and related resources

Appropriate and comprehensive induction is important in ensuring a grounding for successful study. CAPA’s 2004 Statement outlined that universities should ensure all postgraduates are provided with a formal induction that either outlines, or directs students to clear and concise information on, the following:32

- departmental procedures;
- access policy;
- safety policy;
- an introduction to departmental staff;
- an introduction to the department’s culture;
- instruction in relevant computer applications;
- advice on accessing to resources;
- written documentation about the department;
- information on using library resources (including virtual resources);

and, for research students

- a guide to preparing a research proposal; and
- advice on the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the candidate.

Specified standards regarding induction and orientation are increasingly becoming a standard feature of minimum resource policies. Standards relevant to induction and orientation activities found as part of this review have been grouped under the following headings:

- Induction and orientation;
- Requirement to disclose policy (eg via a handbook); and
- Training and development opportunities.

These are outlined in detail under the following headings.

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4.2.1 Induction and orientation

The School should ensure that commencing research higher degrees students are:

• introduced to school staff and other postgraduate students;
• introduced to relevant Library staff;
• given a tour of School and other relevant research facilities;
• informed about the Postgraduate Association;
• made aware of ethical considerations and safety procedures relevant to the student’s research;
• provided with information on procedures for the resolution of any conflict or dissatisfaction with other matters which are impeding the student’s progress and are outside the student’s control;
• introduced to staff of the Research & Graduate Studies Office and directed to the Graduate Centre Website; and
• informed about the Orientation Program conducted by the Research & Graduate Studies Office.

The University of Ballarat's Minimum Resources and other Support for Research Higher Degree Students.

Among the challenges faced in developing a clear and concise policy on minimum resource standards is that of determining which aspects of the postgraduate experience to address directly, and the level of detail that is appropriate to specify in university policy and procedures. As university induction and orientation procedures continue to improve and evolve, it becomes an increasingly daunting prospect to specify each of the elements of a comprehensive induction program in a minimum resources policy. It is important therefore that the main features, and those most relevant to student support and success, are clearly described, or referred to where they appear elsewhere, as part of the minimum standards described. The University of Ballarat’s policy offers a good example of induction requirements on commencement.33

Many universities compile relevant information for postgraduates into an annual guide or handbook. Such guides typically include copies of or links to relevant policies and procedures, details of training and development opportunities and information on ancillary and support services. These in many cases also described policies and further information on supervisory arrangements. Such guides or handbooks are typically made available at student inductions at the commencement of each year.34

34 There are many excellent examples of postgraduate handbooks available, however it was beyond the scope of the current paper to provide an overview or evaluation for each.
4.2.2 Disclosure requirements

Each department must provide comprehensive induction for all new postgraduates, and include in this induction specific information about the facilities and resources available for postgraduates and how these may be accessed.

From The University of Melbourne’s Infrastructure Support for Postgraduate Research Students: The Responsibilities of Academic Departments.

Minimum resource standards have little effect where they are not widely unknown. Awareness of relevant policies and procedures more broadly is also a key consideration, not only on commencement, but also during the course of a postgraduate degree.

Many institutions specify requirements for making minimum resource guidelines available in the guidelines themselves. Both the University of Melbourne’s policy and that from the ANU offer good examples of standards for obligations in the provision of information to students. 35

Information on minimum resource support for programs of study should be conveyed to both commencing and continuing HDR students. Colleges should ensure HDR students are familiar with the resources available to support their research at local, College and University levels. The responsibility for communicating all relevant information, as has been detailed in this guideline, rests with the College.

From ANU’s Minimum Allocation of Resources for Research Students.

4.2.3 Training and development opportunities

Candidates should be encouraged to engage in and contribute to the professional life and culture of the School wherever possible. Schools should offer suitably qualified candidates the opportunity to tutor, demonstrate or engage in other professional development activities, within the guidelines on work for Higher Degree Research candidates.

UNSW’s Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Students Guideline.

Many minimum resource policies also either refer to, or outline in detail, the structured skills and professional development programs available to students. Here again institutions need to balance how much detail they specify in policies and procedures. Information on the range of skills and professional development opportunities available should however feature prominently as part of induction and orientation of students, regardless of how this information is presented.

Opportunities to engage in skills and professional development activities outside of those directly related to study or research tend to be highly valued by students. 36 These might be regarded as relatively un-structured skills and professional development opportunities. The University of New South Wales offers a good example of the kind of support for professional development activities that feature in minimum resource guidelines. 37

37 University of New South Wales (UNSW) Graduate Research School (2009). Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Students Guideline. University of New South
4.3 Workspace, facilities and resources for research

Each student should have unfettered, though not necessarily sole, access to:
1. photocopying facilities, this shall include an account for photocopying within university libraries;
2. information technology support and departmental technical support;
3. tea room;
4. wash room; and
5. full library services including Australian and overseas interlibrary loans and prompt access to subject librarians and other library staff.

Access to these services shall reflect the needs of on and off campus students and full and part-time students and should in all relevant instances be provided on a 24 hour basis for the entire year excluding public holidays. These facilities shall be provided at the university’s expense.

From CAPA’s 2004 Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study.

Standards specified regarding workspace facilities and resources for research found in the process of preparing this report are almost exclusively for full time, internal research postgraduates. There were however instances where coursework postgraduates, and part time, distance and external research students were also given detailed consideration (addressed in detail in sections 4.5 and 4.6 of this report).

Access to workspaces that are safe, secure and conducive to study, and to the production and dissemination of quality research, represents a key dimension to minimum standards of resources for postgraduates. Most resource standard policies will offer general guidance on the physical dimensions of the workspace that should be made available for each student, while in some cases exact dimensions are set out. Many institutions have implemented resource-standard policies that have drawn directly from CAPA’s 2004 Statement (as for example in the case of The University of Western Sydney, outlined below).38

[A] work space is a standard space provided for the purpose of desk-based research and writing. The workspace will:
1. meet health and safety regulations;
2. be suitably insulated from noise
3. be accessible to people of all abilities
4. have 24 hour access to both women and men
5. be free of discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race and sexuality; and
6. be free of sexual harassment.

(Adapted from the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations’ 2004 Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study).

UWS’ Research Higher Degree Candidature Essential Resources Policy.


CAPA’s 2004 Statement also described the provision of or access to specific features of workspaces, facilities and resources, including:\(^{39}\)

- an office of no less than 4 square meters in floor space which is secure, ventilated, heated, cooled, lit to ASA standards, and located proximate to toilets and other amenities;
- an ergonomically sound chair and desk, desk space to be no less than 0.5 sqm;
- a lockable four draw filing cabinet;
- a telephone;
- a personal computer, with access to current research and publishing tools including e-mail and the internet; and
- sufficient laboratory space, equipment and facilities to complete the program of research…
- access to a fax machine;
- postage and courier;
- an on campus mailing address, and
- stationery.

Many institutions have responded directly to these guidelines. Standards relevant to specific features of workspaces, facilities and resources for research found as part of this review have been grouped under the following headings:

- Assured access to lab space;
- Secure, dedicated postgrad access;
- 24 hour access;
- Tea / common room access;
- Sole-use desk and chair;
- Sole-use Book shelving;
- Secure sole-use filing and storage;
- Sole-use Computer (networked);
- Word processing software;
- Statistics package - access;
- Sole-use email account;
- IT support;
- Access to telephone;
- Shared printer access;
- Shared photocopying facilities;
- Shared fax / scanner access;
- Stationery for research;
- Campus mailing address; and
- Free document delivery and ILL.

These are outlined in detail under the following sections.

4.3.1 Assured access to lab space

Bench space and access to suitably maintained scientific and technical equipment appropriate to the discipline in which the research is being conducted and complying with the University's Workplace Health & Safety Policies. In particular, consideration must be given to the location and operation of this equipment to ensure that its use does not place the student at risk of injury.

JCU's Minimum Standard of Resources and Facilities and other Support Provided for Research Higher Degree Students.

Many institutions referred to access to lab space in their minimum resource guidelines. In some cases access was described in general terms, while in others access to lab space was specifically assured. James Cook University offers a good example of a clear and detailed assurance in regard to access to lab space and technical equipment.40

Some institutions specify access to lab space in comparable terms to that for office or desk space, as in the case of Flinders University.41

As a minimum…[a] sole use of a desk or equivalent work space in a shared office, research laboratory, or similar area [will be made available to] RHD students enrolled on a full-time basis and studying in internal mode… Similar resources will be made available to part-time internal students, except that they will have shared use of a desk…

From Flinders’ Statement of Minimum Resources: Minimum Resources for Research Higher Degree Students.

4.3.2 Secure, dedicated postgraduate access

Secure, dedicated access to a work area is considered here as having restricted access for postgraduates only, and that access is limited through security measures of some form. This is often offered in the form of shared office accommodation, as is the case at the University of Queensland.42

All full-time RHD candidates should be provided with/offered shared office accommodation that includes a sole-use desk, lockable filing cabinet and bookshelf facilities... Schools should endeavour to provide part-time RHD candidates with shared office accommodation and at least shared use of a desk.

From UQ's Infrastructure Guidelines for the Support of Research Higher Degree Students in Enrolling Units.

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Some institutions also stipulate that postgraduate workspaces should be within reasonable proximity to the School or Department providing principal supervision, as in the case of the University of Ballarat.43

The University of Ballarat's Minimum Resources and other Support for Research Higher Degree Students.

4.3.3 24 hour access

1. Accommodation appropriate to the discipline; accommodation of no less than four square metres in floor space which is secure, ventilated, heated, lit to ASA standards, and located proximate to toilets and other amenities, with a desk space of no less than 0.5m². There should be a clear statement about the space provided for part-time students.

2. Twenty-four hour building access and own keys.

From UTAS' Minimum Resources and other Support for Research Higher Degree Students.

Safety and security are always important considerations when it comes to on-campus facilities. This is an important consideration for postgraduates, who often spend a significant amount of time on campus, and often use campus facilities outside of peak times. The University of Tasmania offers a good example of clearly described minimum standards in support of a safe, secure and productive work environment for postgraduates.44

Extended access to infrastructure for part-time students in particular is an important issue. Part-time students benefit greatly from after hours access to laboratories, computer rooms and extended library opening hours. A number of institutions specifically assure part-time research students pro-rated access to the same facilities as their full time colleagues; UniSA being one example.45

On campus HDR students with be provided with the following facilities, available 24 hours a day, subject to safety requirements. Access will be negotiated with each student taking into account their needs, including any disability-related services, and preferred mode of study. Part-time HDR students shall have pro rata access to the same facilities as full-time HDR students negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

From UniSA's Statement of minimum resources for higher degrees by research students.


4.3.4 Tea or common room access

Amenities [for research postgraduates should include]:

- Access to staffroom facilities as made available to ACU staff
- Access to washroom facilities as made available to ACU staff

From ACU's Policy On The Provision Of Physical Facilities And Resources For Research.

Assuring access to a tea-room or a common room may sound like a matter too trivial to specify in university policies and procedures. However, as clearly demonstrated in the Research Education Experience report commissioned by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR), a sense of collegiality is among the most important aspects of the postgraduate experience.46

Access to amenities comparable to those enjoyed by staff means more than being able to make a cup of tea. A number of institutions are explicit in assuring access for research students to amenities on the same basis as staff, with the Australian Catholic University offering an example of best practice in this area.47

4.3.5 Sole-use desk and chair

Each full-time candidate shall have access to:

a) Office space accessible 24 hrs a day for the duration of candidature;
b) A chair and a desk;
c) A personal computer with software appropriate to the candidate’s area of research, including a suite of administrative software such as Microsoft Office, quantitative/qualitative data analysis software and Internet access;
d) Lockable storage space;
e) Full library services;
f) At least 1 hour of supervision time per week (see Appendix I and Section 3.6 of Code of Practice for Research Degree Supervision at RMIT).

From RMIT's Minimum resources policy.

Access to workspace and related equipment represents “the basics” when it comes to minimum resource standards for postgraduates. Some may say that it doesn’t get much more basic than access to a desk and a chair. Yet many institutions go through painful contortions in their policies and procedures to avoid committing to access to these, even in the case of full time, internal research students.

Others, however, seem to have no difficulty in making a clear and direct undertaking (to full time research candidates at least), with RMIT being among those with best-practice standards in this area.48

4.3.6 Sole-use book-shelving and secure sole-use filing and storage

A desk, chair and adequate storage space for books, reference materials etc. should be provided for each on campus full-time research student.

From Curtin's Essential Facilities for On-Campus Higher Degree by Research Students.

Regardless of whether it is a virtue or a vice, research students are often known for collecting large amounts of literature and research-related materials. Many however must work with materials that are sensitive, fragile or confidential. Given that years of work are often invested in them, all research materials are valuable in their own right, and invaluable to students, particularly where their prospects for completion depend on them.

Adequate storage is defined in CAPA's 2004 statement as being access to adequate book shelving along with the equivalent of two regular lockable filing cabinet drawers at a minimum. The University of New England and The University of Canberra again offer examples of best-practice in this area, as outlined below:49

Each full time higher degree by research student based on campus should have access to… a chair, desk and bookshelf [and a] lockable storage space that includes a four drawer filing cabinet. Adequate shared facilities are to be made available for part time students and off-campus students when on campus.

From UC's Minimum Facilities and Resources Statement.

All workspace areas/offices occupied by full-time internal and external postgraduate research students (when on campus)… are to be equipped with…[a] minimum of 2 linear metres of bookshelf per student [and o]ne lockable filing cabinet (minimum 2 drawers) per student. A key for the filing cabinet is to be held by the student and a spare held securely by the School’s Administrative Assistant, subject to approval by the Head of School.

From UNE's Minimum Facilities for UNE Postgraduate Research Students Policy.

4.3.7 Sole-use Computer

RHD Laptop Scheme

All commencing RHD candidates (full-time, part-time, on and off campus) will receive a laptop. The terms and conditions associated with this scheme are attached. Laptops will not be posted overseas to candidates located offshore.

Newcastle's Innovative RHD Laptop Scheme, in Guidelines for Resourcing Research Higher Degree Candidates.

Sole-use access to a computer is consistently among the most highly valued resources made available to postgraduates.50 Many institutions however only


50 This was again confirmed in the course of the Postgraduate Services and Representation pilot study conducted in 2009 (available at www.capa.edu.au/postgraduate-services-and-
suggest computer access as a guideline only, or include a disclaimer to the effect that it may only be offered on a shared basis.

While quite a few institutions do in fact guarantee full-time research students sole-use access to a computer, Newcastle University has by far the most sensible and innovative provisions when it comes to computer access, with a “yours to keep” RHD laptop policy. Clearly a sector-leading best-practice example, the policy provides a laptop free of charge to all full-time, part-time and external research candidates for the duration of their candidature, and allows them to keep it if they manage to complete their degree.51

4.3.8 Access to software, email and IT support

All research candidates, on commencement of their research, are expected to be provided with:

iii. Technical support and research and communication tools such as access to the web, access to the University wireless internet, and a UNSW e-mail account.

iv. Computing equipment and appropriate software for their research. Postgraduate research students must have access to on-campus computer facilities for data analysis, writing and information access. This might involve use of desktop computers, mainframe systems or high performance computing systems or time; networked printing; technical advice; and help with academic software supported by the University.

From UNSW's Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Students Guideline.

Access to software, an email account and IT support are for various reasons often assumed to be available, however most institutions make this explicit in their minimum resources policies (as in the case of UNSW, outlined above).52 Some institutions regard research postgraduates as being on the same basis as academic members of staff in terms of access to basic facilities. IT support is therefore often assumed in minimum resource statements, usually by virtue of access to the broader IT facilities supported by that institution.

4.3.9 Photocopy, printer, telephone, facsimile and scanner access

All workspace areas/offices occupied by full-time internal and external postgraduate research students (when on campus)… are to be equipped with one telephone with voicemail or answering machine per HDR area/office. Free local access will be permitted on phones and photocopy and printer access will be provided by the School through which a student is enrolled [and] controlled fax access as determined by the Head of School.

From UNE's Minimum Facilities for UNE Postgraduate Research Students Policy.


Most institutions specify photocopier, printer, telephone, facsimile and scanner access as part of their minimum resource standards. Some include qualifications to the effect that they are only general guidelines, while others, such as for example the University of New England, make a clear direct undertaking regarding the availability of these resources.53

4.3.10 Stationery for research, campus mailing address, Document delivery and ILL

HDR candidates shall also have reasonable access to appropriate School /Centre/Group or Institute stationery and postage for the purposes of their research and will be provided an on-campus postal address Mailbox. Large mail outs for research purposes will be requested from Candidate Project Funds.

From UWS’ Research Higher Degree Candidature Essential Resources Policy.

Many institutions specify access to stationery and mailing facilities for research-related purposes, as in the case of the University of Western Sydney.54 “Stationery,” understood in broad terms, is usually made available for research related purposes. Basic supplies are sometimes made available at no cost, although this definitely varies both within and between institutions. It is common for institutions to allocate each student a budget for basic maintenance support, with expenditure guidelines typically including stationery and other research-related consumables, as in the case of Flinders University:55

As a minimum... basic maintenance support for consumables such as stationery, photocopying, printing, library costs, and other research-related items, either through direct funding or in kind [will be made available to] RHD students enrolled on a full-time basis and studying in internal mode. Similar resources will be made available to part-time internal students, except that they will have shared use of a desk and pro rata basic maintenance support.

From Flinders’ Statement of Minimum Resources: Minimum Resources for Research Higher Degree Students.

Many institutions also provide an allocation for document delivery and inter-library loans. The University of Canberra for example provides research students with up to 200 inter-library loans without cost to doctoral candidates and up to 100 for research masters students.56

55 Ibid. Funding for the “direct costs” of research, including research maintenance and consumables is addressed in detail under section 4.4. of this report.
4.4 Direct costs

Universities should provide funds to cover expenses arising from field work, experiments, data collection and conference attendance. (Such funds shall be made available on an annual basis, and the amount available to each student in a department must be clearly stated on the departmental web site.)

CAPA’s 2004 Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study.

Funding to support the direct costs of research is an important issue for students. As the 2008 study by Pearson et al. found, undertaking research is not cheap. On average students invested close to $5,000 of their own funds on research-related expenses in the first 18 months of candidature (as reflected in Figure 1 below).  

Figure 1  Private funds provided for their doctorate according to respondents to a 2005 national survey, by Broad Field of Study (n = 4,960).

Funding for research related expenses helps alleviate some of the financial pressure of study related costs. Many universities make a minimum level of funding available to research students for consumables, fieldwork, lab or research costs, or attendance at conferences.

4.4.1 The importance of support for the direct costs of research

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government fund the full cost of each higher degree by research program at Australian universities through the Research Training Scheme and within all national competitive grant funding programs. This funding should take into account...
- the travel and accommodation needs of students for research collaboration, regardless of geographic location; and
- the provision and maintenance of a minimum standard of supervision and resources.

Recommendation 4, Building Australia’s Research Capacity (p.37).

The importance of support for the direct costs of research borne by students caught the attention of the House of Representatives Committee on Industry, Science and Innovation. In the final report from the *House of Representatives Inquiry into Research Training and Research Workforce Issues in Australian Universities*, the Committee concluded that funding for the direct costs of research borne by students should be factored into estimations of the full costs of research, and that this specifically include funding for research related travel and provision of minimum standards of supervision and resources. This recommendation and the issue of transparent costing for research has subsequently been addressed by the Federal Government as part of the development of a national *Research Workforce Strategy*.59

### 4.4.2 Standards in place to support the direct costs of research

**HDR Candidate Project Funds**

(34) An Academic Unit is required to use part of its Research Training Scheme budget for **HDR Candidate Project Funds (CPF)**.

(35) **CPF** is a pool of money that can be accessed for legitimate claims of up to $2000 per candidate per full-time year in the humanities and social sciences. In consumable-intensive areas such as the sciences, and where extensive fieldwork is undertaken, it is expected that the maximum allocation would be $3000. It is also acknowledged that not all candidates require the full sum each year. Schools, Centres and Research Groups will manage the disbursement of funds, working to guidelines provided by the Office of Research Services. A flexible approach may be considered that permits allocation to an individual more than the nominal annual sum.

From UWS’ *Research Higher Degree Candidature Essential Resources Policy*. Many institutions allocate each student a budget in support of research related expenses, a good example of which can be found in the case of the University of Western Sydney (as outlined above). Each are accompanied by expenditure guidelines typically including a range of research-related consumables and expenses. Guidelines for the kind of expenses that may be claimed, and to what value, vary by school, faculty and department for each university.

Typically a funding allocation is available for research related expenses, including costs related to fieldwork, conferences, additional library services, surplus photocopying, thesis preparation, or other expenses justifiable as a legitimate research or research-related cost. A good overview of the kind of guidelines in place can be found in the policy of the University of Newcastle,

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59 **Department of Innovation Industry Science and Research (DIISR)** (2010). *Meeting Australia’s research workforce needs: A consultation paper to inform the development of the Australian Government's research workforce strategy*. Canberra, ACT, Department of Innovation Industry Science and Research (DIISR). (p.29).
While most policies appear to be along these general lines, there is significant variation between (and even within) institutions on the exact details of how much is allocated to cover these expenses each year, what is likely to be a legitimate research-related expense claim, and what is not. These guidelines also appear to change over time.62

### Annual RHD Candidate Allocation

Each Faculty has its own policy for the way this allocation is administered and may be used. Typically, uses of the annual allocation are:

- project costs (e.g., cost associated with surveys, interviews, statistical advice, training courses, data entry and processing)
- the direct cost of consumables required for the candidates research project
- travel and fieldwork related to the research project
- conference attendance and participation (including registration, travel and accommodation)
- purchase of software (or software licences), books, journals, media resources etc. that are related to the research project
- purchase or lease of equipment required for the research project
- publication costs for research papers arising from the candidate’s research.

All uses of these funds must be approved by the supervisor and Head of School.

From Newcastle's Guidelines for Resourcing Research Higher Degree Candidates.

Student research grants are typically administered by the AOU, and approval from the supervisor, head of school and/or faculty representative is normally required before claims are approved. Unexpended funds may in some cases be carried forward (where a good example may be found in the case of Curtin University) while at other institutions they may not.

Opportunities for postgraduates to attend and participate in conferences in their discipline feature among the most important aspects of the postgraduate experience.63 Many institutions specify support for conference attendance as part of their research support guidelines. Some institutions dedicate resources for conference support over and above that allocated for other research-related costs (as in the case of the University of Canberra, as outlined below).64

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62 Student should therefore consult the most up-to-date guidelines for their own AOU before incurring any research-related expenses they hope to have reimbursed.


Conference Support

In addition to funds referred to under Other Resources above, all PhD and PD students should have access to support funding to assist with the costs of attending at least two national or one international conference over the period of the candidature. Students are expected to present a paper or poster at the conference. Support for such conferences should be approximately $2000 during the candidature; funding in excess of this may be provided by the Faculty/Research Centre or research group from research funds.

Masters students should be assisted to attend at least one national conference during candidature.

From UC's Minimum Facilities and Resources Statement.

Some institutions offer significant resources over and above that provided through student-administered research funds (as in the case of UC). Others offer relatively generous student-administered allocations. Students should note however that while some institutions appear to offer generous annual student-administered allocations, there is significant variation between institutions on which research related expenses are covered by the university, and which are drawn from the students’ budget. Prospective students should be wary in regard to the proportion of the resources available to them that are “costed” out of their RSM allocation. For example, most institutions allow free inter-library loans and document delivery up to a quota over-and-above their RSM allocation, while others cost such expenses from out of the student RSM allocation.
4.5 Part time, distance and external research students

Figure 2

Roughly 50% of domestic research higher degree students are enrolled on a part-time basis (as outlined in Figure 2 above).^65^ Pearson et al. also found that enrolment status was not a static category, and that the majority of domestic research students move between full and part time enrolment during the course of their degree.^66^ Part time enrolment therefore is an important consideration for research students, and this extends to their ability to access the facilities and resources necessary for the conduct of quality research.

It seems reasonable in some respects to vary the amount of resources and levels of access available to part time research candidates relative to their full time colleagues. Part time research students have twice as long in calendar years to complete their degree, and typically have different patterns of campus use to their full time peers. However, in many other respects their needs are the same. It certainly does not follow that simply because there are some differences in their needs and in patterns in their use of resources that they should be excluded from consideration in minimum resource standards altogether.

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**Part-time, on-campus RHD candidates are provided with the same minimum level of resources as full-time candidates, except that access to a desk, chair, dedicated workspace and a lockable filing cabinet may need to be on a shared basis.**

From Newcastle's *Guidelines for Resourcing Research Higher Degree Candidates*.

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^65^ International research students are for the most part prevented from part-time enrolment due to the current visa constraints.

Many institutions include very good consideration for part time, distance and externally enrolled research students as part of their minimum resource standards for postgraduate study. Some are explicit that the same resources should be available to part time as full time candidates, excepting that in some cases resources may need to be provided on a pro-rated or shared basis (as in the case of the University of Newcastle, as outlined above). Some institutions also provide very good resources for distance and external students in particular, with Charles Sturt University offering a good example:

The level of financial resources provided to distance education candidates should be no less than the level of financial resources provided to internal candidates.

From CSU's Progress, Supervision And Assessment Regulations: Theses And Other Examinable Research Works.

In a small number of cases, the minimum resources available to external students were specifically outlined in policies and procedures, as in the case of The University of South Australia.

[Part time students]

Part-time HDR students shall have pro rata access to the same facilities as full-time HDR students negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

External students

Where HDR students study off campus such that they relinquish direct access to study facilities, the University will provide them with resources outlined below. Part-time external HDR students shall have pro rata access to the same facilities as full-time external HDR students, negotiated on a case-by-case basis. For full-time external students, resources shall include:

- technical and IT support;
- library assistance via phone or online, electronic document delivery to desktop and postal delivery of loan items and documents;
- maintenance allowance of at least $500 per annum (details as per on campus students, above);
- at least $800 available to each HDR student for the purpose of delivering paper/s, preferably refereed, at conferences during their enrolment and preferably on an annual basis. Consultation with the supervisor is required to determine the choice of conference;
- where HDR students do not hold scholarships, an allowance of $200 for the production and binding of the final copy of the thesis.

From UniSA's Statement of minimum resources for higher degrees by research students.

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4.6 Coursework postgraduates

Despite the growing proportion of coursework students in the postgraduate community, there are still relatively few instances where resource standards are specified for this group. The need for minimum standards for coursework postgraduates is now becoming particularly acute, given the increasing variability in the quality and standards of coursework postgraduate program delivery and support across the Australian higher education sector.

CAPA’s 2004 *Statement of Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study* outlined a range of resource needs specific to coursework postgraduates, including facilities, access to study space, computer access, printing and photocopying facilities, induction and orientation, timetabling considerations and the importance of out-of-hours access.70

Standards of available resources help alleviate some of the financial pressure of study related costs, which vary significantly both across and within universities (and often even within departments). The 2006 *Student Finances Survey* found coursework postgraduates in particular invest significant amounts each semester in textbooks and course related materials.71 Many coursework postgraduate programs require additional equipment such as lab materials, specialised tools, art supplies, medical instruments and other equipment. These are not optional and in many cases the costs are not covered by the provider.

Examples do exist where students in some postgraduate coursework programs receive excellent support for study related costs and materials. Broadly however it is clear that research students benefit more consistently from minimum standards for support for study related needs. While most universities now have specific policies on the provision of resources and facilities for postgraduate research students, only a few include for consideration resources and facilities for postgraduate coursework students.

Given the increasing importance of minimum standards in this area, it may be useful to review minimum standards for coursework postgraduates in the following senses:

- Standards relevant to the delivery of quality coursework postgraduate degree programs;
- Resource standards relevant to supporting coursework postgraduate degree programs containing a significant research component; and
- Resource and support needs of coursework postgraduates as a distinct group, for whom the provision of specific resources makes a significant contribution to the quality of the postgraduate experience.

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Detailed examination of the impact of the deregulation of coursework postgraduate fees is long overdue. One of the areas where coursework postgraduates have arguably seen a decline in quality is in the provision of coursework masters degrees. It is difficult however to address quality issues related to the delivery of academic programs by means of minimum standards in the same manner as that for resources for study. There is some hope that minimum standards in the delivery of coursework postgraduate programs may be addressed as part of The Australian Learning and Teaching Council’s Learning and Teaching Academic Standards (LTAS) project. Further attention to minimum academic standards in this area may also feature as part of the current review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

Consideration of resource standards for coursework postgraduate degrees with a significant research component does in fact feature among several minimum resources policies, that of Edith Cowan University being one example:

> Individual faculties should consider the extent of support they are able to provide to students enrolled in coursework higher degrees that have a research component.

ECU’s Postgraduate Research Student Support Policy.

UNE’s Minimum Facilities for Postgraduate Research Students Policy applies equally to Professional Doctorates and Research Masters postgraduates with research component of not less than two-thirds (66%). Similar consideration is also given in QUT’s policy, as outlined below:

> Elements of these guidelines will be applicable to all postgraduate degrees… containing a significant research component. Some aspects of the guidelines also apply to coursework components of higher degrees.

QUT’s Statement of Infrastructure Provision for QUT Postgraduate Research Students.

Cases also exist where the research component of coursework postgraduate degrees are addressed under broader policies and procedures. These in turn may have implications for access to resources for coursework postgraduates with a significant research component. Students should always double-check with their faculty, school or department however, as access will almost certainly vary.

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5 Invitation for input and feedback

The purpose of this consultation draft is to invite input and feedback on aspects outlined in this report.

All interested parties, including university staff, student organisations and students, are invited to respond to the following discussion points:

- Does the report identify the right factors?
- Are there any important aspects to minimum resources for postgraduate study you believe have been omitted?
- Are there any examples of best practice in minimum resource standards for postgraduates that have not been included you would like to recommend?
- Do you have any other recommendations, suggestions or feedback on promoting quality and supporting continuous improvement in the area of minimum resources for postgraduate students?

Both institutions and individuals are invited to respond to this report, at:

benchmarking@capa.edu.au

The closing date for responses is November 30 2010.

If you have additional input or feedback, or have questions about this discussion paper, please contact CAPA at benchmarking@capa.edu.au, or (03) 9650 7666.

Responses will be posted to the CAPA website. Please indicate if you would like for your response to the Discussion Paper to remain confidential.


Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) (2007). National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and

Department of Innovation Industry Science and Research (DIISR) (2010). Meeting Australia’s research workforce needs: A consultation paper to inform the development of the Australian Government's research workforce strategy. Canberra, ACT, Department of Innovation Industry Science and Research (DIISR).  


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Office of Research and Development Curtin University of Technology (2010). Essential Facilities for On-Campus Higher Degree by Research Students. Curtin University of Technology:  


Queensland University of Technology (QUT) University Academic Board (2006). *Statement of Infrastructure Provision for QUT Postgraduate Research Students*. Queensland University of Technology (QUT): 

RMIT University (2010). *Minimum resources policy*. RMIT University: 


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University of Tasmania (2002). Minimum Infrastructure Standards for Graduate Research Candidates. University of Tasmania:


Appendices

Appendix I  Features of minimum resources policies

Features of minimum resources policies found were grouped under the following headings:

- **Quality assurance provisions** *(not scored)*
  - Reporting and compliance provisions
  - Complaints handling provisions
  - Assurance of postgraduate committee representation
  - Other QA / evaluation measures

- **Induction and orientation** *(not scored)*
  - Induction and orientation
  - Requirement to disclose policy (eg via a handbook)
  - Training and development opportunities

- **Workspace, facilities and resources for research** *(rated)*
  - Assured access to lab space
  - Secure, dedicated postgrad access
  - 24 hour access
  - Tea / common room access
  - Sole-use desk and chair
  - Sole-use Book shelving
  - Secure sole-use filing and storage
  - Sole-use Computer (networked)
  - Word processing software
  - Statistics package - access
  - Sole-use email account
  - IT support
  - Access to telephone
  - Shared printer access
  - Shared photocopying facilities
  - Shared fax / scanner access
  - Stationery for research
  - Campus mailing address
  - Free document delivery and ILL

Direct costs of research *(not scored)*
  - Student administered funding (per annum)
  - Support for conferences

- **Resource standards for part time, distance or external research postgraduates**

- **Resource standards for coursework higher degree students w/ research component**.
### Appendix II  Providers assessed

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### Appendix III  Minimum resource standards for postgraduate study 2010 (summary table)

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## Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study Policy and Guidelines 2010

### Workspace, facilities and resources for research (rated)

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<td>G</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>shared</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scoring for assurance

- **A clear cut**
- **No more than a single use**
- **Shared**
- **Guideline**
- **Not specified**

### Notes

- **Secure, dedicated postgrad access**
- **24 Hour Access**
- **Tea / common room access**
- **Sole-use Desk and chair**
- **Sole-use Bookshelving**
- **Secure sole-use filing and storage**
- **Sole-use Computer (networked)**
- **Word processing software**
- **Statistics package**
- **Remote access to IT**
- **Access to telephone**
- **Access to fax / scanner**
- **Stationary for research**
- **Campus mailing address**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Direct costs (indicative only)</th>
<th>Part time, Distance or External research students</th>
<th>Courswork higher degree students w/ research component</th>
<th>Notable features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The University of Sydney</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Some guidelines in place</td>
<td>Not mentioned Guidelines note considerable scope for variation by school and faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Melbourne</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Some guidelines in place</td>
<td>Not mentioned Clearly presented guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of New South Wales</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Some guidelines in place</td>
<td>Not mentioned Policy difficult to locate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned Policy's scope specifically refers also to services supported by MUPRA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned Access to some resources may be based on a &quot;basket&quot; system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Technology, Sydney</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Some guidelines in place</td>
<td>Not mentioned Good provisions for part-time students. Resources policy difficult to locate on website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT University</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>Not mentioned Good provisions for part-time students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Deakin are at the prepatory stages of developing a policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Queensland</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Curtin allow rollover of RSM amounts year-to-year. Excellent provisions for off-campus HDR students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Australia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>~ $1,100</td>
<td>Very good, detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>Not mentioned Very good consideration for externally enrolled research students. All candidates get a $200 thesis allowance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q University of Technology</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Guidelines include a broad range of research student support measures and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good provisions for part-time and external students.</td>
<td>Good provisions for PT, ext and OWD. Policy appears to discriminate against international students, in dedicating specific levels of support for HECs-Liable and RTS only (clause 2.8.3). Policy poorly presented on website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>~ $1,000</td>
<td>Some consideration for part-time students</td>
<td><em>Recommended minimum standard</em> only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned Clearly presented policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U Southern Queensland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Some consideration given.</td>
<td>Conference funding support appears to be concentrated in designated areas. Policy appears as pro-forma only (comparable to Adelaide).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wollongong</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned Conference funding support appears to be concentrated in designated areas. Policy appears as pro-forma only (comparable to Adelaide).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ballarat</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>Not mentioned Good provisions re Research Environment &amp; Culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Australian National University</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good provisions for part-time and external students.</td>
<td>Generous provisions, but many expressed as guidelines in general terms, or subject to ADU discretion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>Good provisions for part-time and external students. Policy appears to discriminate against international students, in dedicating specific levels of support for HECs-Liable and RTS only (clause 2.8.3). Policy poorly presented on website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Qld University</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>Good provisions for part-time and external students. Policy appears to discriminate against international students, in dedicating specific levels of support for HECs-Liable and RTS only (clause 2.8.3). Policy poorly presented on website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>~ $1,000</td>
<td>Some consideration given.</td>
<td>Conference funding support appears to be concentrated in designated areas. Policy appears as pro-forma only (comparable to Adelaide).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Newcastle</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>~ $1,500 (min)</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Good provisions for part-time candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>~ $2,000 - $3,000</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Not mentioned Many aspects drawn directly from CAPA's Battement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Adelaide</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Adelaide appear to have a &quot;check-box&quot; pro-forma in place of a policy (comparable to Wollongong). Items are therefore constructed here as guidelines only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of New England</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>~ 1,000</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Notable consideration given to part-time and visiting external students. Good consideration of CAPA's CWPG's with research component. Excellent QA provisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Guidelines are generous, but many items do not take the form of an enforceable undertaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flinders University of South Australia</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Clear and concise policy. Details also appear on R&amp;D application form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Good provisions for part-time candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Very good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>Very good detailed consideration given to part-time, distance and external students, and field-work research. Very detailed orientation provisions. Many research-related expenses deductible from student's RSM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Clear, concise and well presented policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tasmania</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good consideration for part-time and external research students.</td>
<td>Clear, concise and well presented policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Canberra</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Good complance, QA and complaints handling provisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cross University</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond University</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not specified / determined by faculty</td>
<td>Good detailed consideration given.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>No clear policy appears to be in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>~ $1,000</td>
<td>Pro-rated and/or shared access</td>
<td>Very clear, concise and well presented policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minimum Resources for Postgraduate Study Policy and Guidelines 2010

Overall rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall rating /5</th>
<th>Overall rating /5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring for accuracy, clarity and usefulness:
- A clear on
- A well concealed
- Not spec.
- Not applicable
- No answers

Deferred comments:
- A clear on
- A well concealed
- Not spec.
- Not applicable
- No answers

Notes on table:
- A clear on
- A well concealed
- Not spec.
- Not applicable
- No answers

Overall rating /5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall rating /5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notable features:
- A clear on
- A well concealed
- Not spec.
- Not applicable
- No answers