

Leave from HDR studies

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- [Higher Degree by Research Administration \(HDRAC\)](#)
- [Extension of candidature](#)
- [Fieldwork](#).

HDR candidates are entitled to take leave or suspend. Taking leave, or suspending, can help you manage challenges that would otherwise impact your ability to finish your degree on time. **Leave** is for a period of a few days or a few weeks. **Suspensions** are for one to four research periods, with different requirements for international and domestic students.

Candidature time limits

The University requires a doctoral candidate who commenced after 1 January 2019 to submit their thesis for examination in a maximum of 3.5 years Equivalent Full-Time Study Load (EFTSL).

Master's by research candidates who commenced after 1 January 2019 are required to submit their thesis no later than 7 research periods EFTSL. Check the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011 \(as amended\)](#) for length of candidature requirements.

Within these maximum time limits, HDR candidates are entitled to take time off for various reasons. If you require more than a few days or few weeks off, check with HDRAC whether you should suspend so you don't use up your allocated candidature time.

Research periods

The timeline for HDR candidature is organised around blocks known as [research periods \(RPs\)](#). An academic year comprises of four RPs. RPs are important for calculating tuition fees, scholarship payments, and the amount of time you have left before you should submit your thesis for examination.

Understanding your leave entitlements

If you think you might need to take time off, check in with the [Higher Degree by Research Administration Centre \(HDRAC\)](#). HDRAC can interpret University policy on leave and other entitlements. They can also let you know exactly how much time you have left to complete your degree.

If you receive a scholarship (from the University or another funding body), you should consult the scholarship's terms and conditions for leave entitlements. Familiarise yourself with the administrative procedures for notifying your funding bodies if you take significant time off, as you might stop receiving payments during these periods. When you return to active candidature you may need to formally notify your funding bodies to restart payments.

Types of leave

Below is a summary of the types of leave available. The University also outlines [HDR leave entitlements](#) on their website

Leave of absence

If you need to take a break for less than one research period, apply for a leave of absence.

A leave of absence does not stop the time on your candidature, meaning you are considered to be enrolled for the relevant research period (and will be liable for tuition fees, if applicable). A leave of absence does not change your completion timeline.

Suspension

If you need to take longer leave, you can apply to suspend your candidature for one or more research periods. **Suspension stops the time on your candidature** for the approved research period, and will therefore change your thesis submission date. This means you will need to [adjust your progress plan to amend your latest possible thesis submission date](#).

HDR candidates can usually only suspend their studies after they have completed 12 months Equivalent Full-Time Study Load, and have had their candidature confirmed (i.e. passed probation). However, you can request a suspension within your first 12 months for exceptional circumstances (for example, health, family or work matters). If you receive a scholarship, check for any restrictions on suspending. For example, the Research Training

Program Stipend Scholarship (RTPSS) does not currently permit suspensions in the first 6 months of candidature, and you will not be eligible for payment during your period of suspension.

Accessing the University library and other facilities while on suspension

If you suspend your studies, you will lose access to University library borrowing privileges, and will need to apply for a temporary library account if you want to use library services during your suspension. Make sure you do this before your suspension starts. To speed up the registration process, the Library suggests submitting the [application form](#) in person to the Student Centre rather than by email. [Visit the library website for further information.](#)

You will also lose access to facilities such as your laboratory, but you can request your lead supervisor to grant you special or voluntary access to the lab during a period of suspension.

Annual leave

Holders of an RTP (domestic) scholarship or a University of Sydney International Scholarship (USydis) are entitled to up to 20 days of recreational leave for each year they receive the award. This leave is integrated into your regular scholarship payments, and leave does not accrue – any portion unused by the end of your award will be forfeited. **So don't forget to take a holiday!**

Parental leave

All HDR students on stipends (RTP, UPA, SISS) who are new parents can access [12 weeks of paid leave](#) over the course of their HDR candidature. **Other scholarships will have different provisions for parental leave** – please read your terms and conditions.

Students with USydis can apply for a maximum of 12 weeks paid parental leave if they give birth during the tenure of the award, and if they have already completed 12 months of their scholarship. You must apply for this leave at least 4 weeks prior to the expected date of delivery (if you want to take a longer period of time off, you can [suspend your candidature](#)).

Pregnancy

Discrimination against a worker due to pregnancy is illegal in Australia. University staff must adhere to policy, and treat all students with respect. HDR supervisors must be responsive and supportive to your health needs – including pregnancy – and be prepared to discuss leave entitlements.

Sick leave

RTP or USydIS holders can apply for up to 10 days of paid sick leave for each year of their scholarship. Consult the terms and conditions of your scholarship for provisions for longer periods of paid sick leave. If you require more time off than this, contact HDRAC to discuss options. If you need to take carer's leave, you may use some of your sick leave for this. If you're deemed ineligible for more than 10 days paid sick leave, you can still try to access leave through a leave of absence or suspension.

International students are allowed to take leave too!

If you're an international student experiencing exceptional circumstances (like pregnancy, illness or misadventure), national legislation obligates the University to provide the opportunity for you to take time off from your studies. [Contact HDRAC](#) for information on applying for a suspension.

Applying for leave and supervisor approval

Even if you're accessing recreational leave allowed by your RTP or USydIS scholarship, you need to give your supervisor notice and log it in RECS. In the case of paid sick leave, inform your supervisor as soon as you reasonably can that you need to take sick leave.

All leave requests should be made via RECS, which includes a step for supervisor approval. Supervisors need to agree with recreational, sick or parental leave requests. Supervisors need to approve leave of absence or suspension leave requests.

Leave entitlements and workplace health and safety

Leave entitlements exist in University policy because the University is legally obliged to look after its workers – which includes HDR candidates. Ignoring a worker's health could mean the University is contravening its responsibility to provide a safe workplace. [Contact SUPRA](#) if you have any concerns or issues around accessing your leave entitlements.

Resuming your research after leave

Just as it's important to officially inform the University of any intention to take leave, it's vital that you comply with any necessary administrative obligations to inform the University when you resume active candidature. This will also ensure any scholarship payments commence again. You will be emailed before you are due to resume your studies with information about how to re-enrol. You should also get in contact with your supervisor to discuss your plans for returning to your studies.

Policies

- [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011](#)

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