

Offshore candidature

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Please note: in February 2021 a new digital system, **Research Education Candidature System (RECS)** was launched to allow HDR candidates to manage many administrative tasks that were previously the responsibility of HDRAC or Sydney Student. Some of our information regarding these processes might be outdated. We are currently in the process of updating it.

If you have difficulties with RECS contact HDRAC for assistance.

Counting time away and completing away

Periods when a student undertakes HDR degree requirements externally (i.e. not on a Usyd campus), whether elsewhere in Australia or overseas, are known as **counting time away**. This includes fieldwork, periods of data collection, and conference travel.

Completing away is when an HDR candidate completes all of their remaining degree requirements externally – either outside Australia, or outside Sydney.

Sometimes **international students** have to finish their thesis in their home country – this can be a solution if you run out of funds, or are required to return home before you can submit. Many **domestic HDR candidates** will also have to spend significant time away from a Usyd campus on research-related travel.

When considering offshore candidature HDR students must be mindful of the minimum time required for onshore candidature. Masters by Research candidates must complete a minimum of 2 research periods within the University of Sydney and PhD candidates must complete a minimum of 4 research periods within the University of Sydney, before submitting their thesis.

Applying to study offshore

The University requires HDR candidates to keep the Higher Degree by Research Administration Centre (HDRAC) updated about **where you intend to complete degree requirements (location of candidature)** and if you want to **take time off from your studies (leave from candidature)**. It is HDRAC's responsibility to ensure you comply with all administrative procedures when completing away or counting time away.

Your first obligation is to get your lead supervisor's approval. When an international HDR student is not able to submit within time, or their scholarship runs out, approval is generally granted for offshore completion. Other times, you will need to discuss your circumstances with your lead supervisor.

Pre-departure checklist

- **Supervision and communication.** Try to have clear discussions with each of your supervisors about communication, feedback and support when you're overseas. How often can you expect to hear from them? Decide on the best method of communication with your supervisors: email, phone or video calls.
- **Internet access.** In many parts of the world internet access can be inconsistent or prohibitively expensive. The University currently provides no assistance with the costs of internet access outside of its campuses.
- **Contact details.** It's important to give your supervisory team alternate contact details in case they have trouble reaching you. Don't forget to update the University's records with your contact details as well.
- **Collaborators, co-authors, group and lab members, and research participants.** Let your research network know your travel plans. If you're used to communicating via social media or forums, check whether your destination country permits use of these channels. If your preferred app isn't available, decide on alternatives before you leave.
- **Presentations and other non-thesis tasks while away.** Your supervisors or research sponsors may have connections with researchers or research centres in your destination country. Discuss whether there is any opportunity or expectation for you to complete non-thesis work while you're away.
- **Completion timeline.** If your submission date is likely to be affected by changing the location of your candidature, your completion timeline may require adjustment. Discuss with your lead supervisor and try not to underestimate how much time you need to complete your degree. It might be stressful to have this conversation with your supervisors, but it is

best if everyone is clear about their expectations. If you are later asked by the University to [Show Good Cause](#) your supervisors might be more willing to give their continued support of your candidature if there were clear and thorough discussions of how much work you realistically had left to complete.

- **Weekly timetable.** If you are an international student and return to your home country, but still have to submit your thesis for examination, it's likely that your scholarship has run out. This means you might need to find time to finish your thesis while also finding a job, or working. [The University has resources for time management](#), which you may find useful.
- **Financing your studies.** If you're an international student who is completing away, and you're no longer receiving a scholarship, **you will still be charged the normal rate of onshore international student fees** (calculated per research period). This places a huge burden on international students to quickly find paid employment, or other scholarships. **Start your search for other funding before you head overseas.** Ask researchers in your field if they know of funding, and if they can connect you with research centres that might need staff. Start your job search before you leave by reaching out to your social networks. Search for job seeker apps or job boards that have opened up since the last time you lived back home.
- **Visa compliance issues.** If you're an international student who needs to discontinue your candidature, and then re-enrol when you are ready to submit, [contact our Legal Service](#) if you have questions about your visa. If you have questions about a new Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE), [make an appointment with of the University's compliance officers while you're still in Sydney](#).
- **Desk, equipment, library access.** Tie up any loose ends relating to on-campus resources. Inform the relevant administrative unit that you don't need your allocated desk anymore (as there could be a waiting list of HDR candidates needing a desk). Return lab keys and other University equipment relating to your research. Consult with the [University library](#) about which of its services you can access while you're overseas.
- **Data storage.** If your thesis is part of larger group research project – or you're using very large data sets or storing data on servers belonging to research institutions other than the University – we recommend you get advice about any implications for data access due to your change in location. Check in with:
 - your project's chief investigator (who is usually your lead supervisor)
 - [the University's research integrity advisors](#)
 - [the ICT Service Desk](#)

- the research data managers of any relevant external organisations.
- **Non-University matters.** If you've been renting a home in Sydney, make sure you're aware of [your legal rights and obligations when ending a tenancy](#). If you're involved in any complaints, grievance processes, or disputes (e.g. consumer matters, vehicle accidents, relationship breakdowns), make sure you inform the relevant parties of your overseas contact details. Double check you have securely retained all relevant documentation, and confirm deadlines for important actions.

Coping while away

Going overseas can hinder students' ability to complete their degree requirements on time – especially for students who have to find full-time employment, resume family and carer duties, and manage other issues. These demands can cause stress. Before you depart, it might benefit you to [consult CAPS' resources for stress management](#).

Accessing a counsellor (either on or off campus) before you head overseas could also empower you with strategies for dealing with stress that you can use in your everyday life. Our article '[Isolation, stress, anxiety, and what to do when you feel like quitting](#)' also has helpful advice and resources.