
Coursework in the VU PhD

Research Period 1 2025

ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising Research
ROP8002 Research Integrity and Ethics

Coursework in the VU PhD: Research Period 1 2025

All graduate researchers undertaking a PhD at VU will enroll in an initial coursework component.

NB: The PhD coursework units will be taught in hybrid mode both in-person at the Footscray Park Campus and via zoom classes (see Timetable below). Students will be notified of details one week before classes commence. Students *do not need to allocate centrally for classes*

This research preparatory coursework initiative aligns with the trend across Australian universities to provide PhD students with a more structured program as part of their research training experience. These structured elements assist in the systematic building of research-related skills and help foster a culture of intellectual engagement and peer learning and support for PhD students.

The VU coursework has been designed with extensive input from research supervisors to support students in the initial stages of their doctoral degree studies. The coursework plays a crucial role in preparing students to take up their positions as researchers in an increasingly complex and multi-disciplinary context, including preparing for PhD candidature and preparing for practice as an independent researcher in the Australian and global research environment.

1. HDR Researcher Integrity Modules

Before you commence your coursework program, you are required to undertake 2-3 HDR Researcher Integrity modules. These modules will take approximately 20 minutes each and will assist you in the preparation for your research project. The issues you cover in overview here you will revisit in greater detail and with application to your own project, in the coursework units. You can find the modules on VU Collaborate, in the 'support and collaborate' space. Please note, you will need your enrolment details to access VU Collaborate; please contact Researcher.Development@vu.edu.au if you have difficulties accessing the modules.

There are up to 4 modules which are appropriate for you to complete in the pre Confirmation of Candidature period (ie approx. the first 6-9 months f/t; 12-18 months p/t). All commencing HDR students *must* complete the following three modules:

1. **The Responsible Conduct of Research**
3. **Planning your Research**
4. **Managing and Recording your Research**

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10. Responsible Conduct of Human Participants Research (if applicable) *or*
11. The Care and Use of Animals in Research (if applicable)

You should **complete at least modules 1 and 3 before the commencement of coursework**. You will also be able to refer back to them in the course of your research degree.

NB: You will be required to have completed the above three core modules (plus any additional relevant modules) in order to present for Confirmation of Candidature.

If you have any queries regarding your access to the VU Collaborate space, please contact Researcher.development@vu.edu.au.

2. **Required Coursework Units**

The coursework units are designed to work hand in hand with disciplinary supervision. Please ensure that you are meeting with your supervisor *throughout the coursework phase*.

[Two core coursework units](#) are offered to all commencing PhD students:

ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising Research ROP8002 Research Integrity and Ethics

Each unit involves approximately 12 hours of class participation via in-person classes together with additional reading and tasks to be completed outside class. The learning activities and assessment tasks in these units are designed to contribute to the development of a high-quality candidature proposal (and Ethics Application if required) in the context of the discipline, and to the success of candidacy overall.

Modes of Delivery

These units are delivered in hybrid mode, via in-person classes on the Footscray Park Campus, L114 and by zoom classes (see **attached timetable, p. 6**).

- Full-time students take both units in the first Research Period;
- P/t students will take ROP8001 in the first Research Period and ROP8002 in the second.
- Students are also required to attend the PhD Coursework Conference in person at Footscray Park on Friday May 30.

Both units will use blended learning spaces on [VU Collaborate](#) which will contain unit information, readings, a calendar of topics and all assessment information and submission. The VU Collaborate spaces will be available approximately 1 week before classes commence.

Frequently Asked Questions about PhD Coursework at VU

Am I required to complete these units?

YES, all commencing¹ PhD students are expected to enrol in and complete both units. Successful completion is a requirement for progress to Confirmation of Candidature, and thus for graduation. It is also a supportive way to commence your research degree and will connect you with other students and staff.

Will how I perform in the units affect my progression to Confirmation of Candidature?

¹ Students entering VU with Advanced Candidature (ie achieved Confirmation of Candidature) are not required to enrol in the units.

YES. You will need a minimum mark of 70% or above in both of the two units to be permitted to present for candidature. In line with University policy you have a maximum of 6 months EFT following the successful completion of the units in which to present for the first milestone of **Confirmation of Candidature**. However, we would expect that most students would be prepared to present for candidature prior to this, ie following notification of successful completion of the Coursework as soon as their supervisors determine that their proposal is of a suitable standard.

What if I don't get an average of 70%?

If your mark for a Unit is less than 70% you will be permitted one resubmission of the major assessment in order to gain 70% (see [Higher Degree by Research Procedure 3](#), B:36). If you still do not have an average of 70%, you will be advised to discontinue your course or transfer to another course, and if you do not follow this advice, in line with University policy, the [Unsatisfactory Progress process](#) will normally be commenced.

Do I need to pay extra for the units?

NO, these two units are a required part of your PhD program and will not involve any additional charge.

Will I still meet with my supervisor/s while I am studying the units?

YES – SUPERVISION BEGINS AT ENROLMENT AND OPERATES IN TANDEM WITH THE COURSEWORK. You will be expected to have regular meetings with your supervisor/s and to continue to work closely with them while you are studying the units. The units have been designed to complement the work you are doing with your supervisors and you will be expected to be having regular meetings outside class with your supervisors as well as regular interactions with other students and researchers in your area to maximise the benefit you get from the learning within each unit. In addition, much of the assessment for the units is designed to be directly able to be incorporated into your candidature proposal and related documentation (eg. ethics application, where required).

Can I apply for exemption from these units?

In a very limited number of cases, exemptions for the Coursework Units may be granted by the Academic Coordinator on the basis of an [application for Advanced Standing](#). If you have consulted the Learning Outcomes for the units and consider that you can make a convincing case to support your argument that you are already familiar with the material covered in the units at AQF 10 level, you should contact Dr Rose Lucas, Academic Coordinator Rose.Lucas@vu.edu.au in the first instance to discuss your case. Please note that these forms require detailed documentation and you should allow sufficient time to complete them.

Please note that the **Application Form for Advanced Standing must be completed and returned to the Academic Coordinator no later than February 1, 2025**, to be considered for S1 2025. Documentary evidence of your prior study ([which needs to be at AQF level 10](#)) and a statement of support from your supervisor are required.

We strongly advise you **only** to apply for exemption for ROP8001 (on the basis of your current research) if your Candidature Proposal is already well advanced, and for ROP8002 if you have extensive prior study or experience in the area of research ethics **at doctoral level**.

However, don't lose sight of how useful the coursework units are, in terms of:

- consolidating your understanding of the nature and expectations of research;
- connecting you with other students; meeting other staff in the Graduate Research area;
- helping you prepare for Confirmation of Candidature by providing assessment tasks which allow you to build skills and incrementally develop your emerging research proposal.

Students find the coursework units a great start to their research career!

A successful application for exemption will not involve any change to your study load for visa or Centrelink purposes.

PhD Coursework Units: Research Period 1, 2025

1. Graduate Researcher Orientation (compulsory for all commencing students)	Friday March 7	10am-1pm L114, FP
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- Commencing students will be enrolled automatically into coursework units; enrolment can be checked on your MyVU Portal
- This unit is taught in hybrid mode. **In person classes will be held in C203 Footscray Park Campus tbc** and will be supplemented by online zoom sessions. Attendance is a requirement. You will be contacted one week prior to classes commencing; you will *not need* to allocate on MyTimetable.
- Full-time students undertake **both** ROP8001 and ROP8002 in first enrolled research period (S); part-time students take ROP8001 in the first research period, ROP8002 in the following.
- Census Date Research Period 1: **March 21, 2025**. Census date is the last day for you to finalise your course enrolment for this research study period. If you wish to change your enrolment, please discuss with the Academic Coordinator- Dr Rose Lucas- prior to lodging an application to gradresearch@vu.edu.au

2. ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising Research

Day	Date	Time	Room
Thursday	1. March 13	4-6pm	By zoom
Saturday	2. March 29	9.30-4	L114
Thursday	3. April 10	4-6 pm	By zoom
Thursday	4. May 1	4-6pm	By zoom
Thursday	5. May 15	4-6pm	By zoom

3. ROP8002 Research Integrity and Ethics

Day	Date	Time	Room
Friday	1. March 7	2-4 pm	L114
Saturday	2. March 15	9.30-4pm	L114
Thursday	3. March 27	4-6pm	By zoom
Thursday	4. April 3	4-6pm	By zoom

4. PhD Coursework Conference (All students required)

Friday	May 30	9-1pm tbc	L114, FP tbc
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5. Towards Confirmation Workshop	f/t July 22, 2025 p/t October 28, 2025 (or refer to your PhD Map)	By Zoom, 10-1pm
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