

Understanding HDR candidate-supervisor relationship challenges (Phase 2)

Final Report – March 2025

Gendered Violence Research Network



UNSW
SYDNEY



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Human Rights
Institute

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The current study, conducted by the Australian Human Rights Institute and the Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN) at the University of New South Wales, Sydney (UNSW), aimed to explore the experiences of HDR candidates (Candidates) and HDR supervisors (Supervisors) pertaining to their supervisory relationships. This included workplace relationship issues arising between Candidates and Supervisors in Australian universities. The study methodology is discussed in detail in section 2 of the report.

Findings are based on data collected from surveys submitted by 1,207 Candidates and 641 Supervisors, and the 30 Candidates and 30 Supervisors interviewed from the 10 universities. Only data from submitted surveys were analysed in the study. Data from incomplete surveys (i.e., not submitted) and surveys from participants who did not meet the eligibility criteria were not included in the dataset for analysis. As not all questions in the surveys were mandatory, not all participants responded to every question in the surveys. Percentage data presented are based on the number of participants who had responded to the questions asked.

Results

Satisfaction with HDR supervision

Most Candidates and Supervisors indicated that they were satisfied with their current HDR supervision experience. Specifically:

- 856 (70.9%) Candidates and 544 (84.9%) Supervisors indicated that they were either 'Satisfied' or 'Very satisfied'
- More Candidates indicated that they were dissatisfied compared to Supervisors. Almost one in five Candidates indicated that they were either 'Dissatisfied' (158, 13.1%) or 'Very dissatisfied' (5.2%) with their supervision experience, but only one in 20 of Supervisors indicated the same ('Dissatisfied' – 32, 5.0%, 'Very dissatisfied' – 5, 0.8%).

Power dynamics between Candidates and Supervisors, and between Supervisors themselves, were issues raised during interviews by both Candidates and Supervisors that affected their level of satisfaction in their supervisory relationships. Some Supervisors acknowledged the potential challenges faced by Candidates and their willingness to address the perceived and real power dynamics inherent in the supervisory relationship.

In the context of interpersonal dynamics, sharing the same cultural and/or language backgrounds were perceived by some study participants to be helpful in the overall supervision experience. The helpfulness through sharing of these backgrounds facilitates rapport and discussion pertaining to challenges in supervision (particularly for Supervisors) and personal needs (particularly for Candidates).

Candidate and Supervisor experiences of challenging behaviours

Challenging behaviours that Candidates and Supervisors might experience in the supervisory relationship were examined. These were behaviours that:

- made Candidates feel ignored, overlooked or uncared for
- affected supervision practice
- were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries
- made Candidates feel unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against.

Across these types of behaviours, the most common behaviours reported by Candidates were their Supervisor:

- not providing timely and constructive feedback on their work or progress (28.6%)
- not clearly communicating expectations (25.8%)
- ignoring the Candidate's attempts to communicate with them (23.2%)

These were also the most common issues in the supervisory relationship identified during interviews.

Candidates reported that the Supervisor behaviours, which had the most impact negatively affected their:

- mental or emotional wellbeing
- relationship with their supervisors
- productivity
- higher degree research progress

For Supervisors, the most common behaviours reported were related to those that affected supervision practice. They were about Candidates:

- not clearly communicating with their Supervisors about the progress of their research (35.7%)
- rebuffing or ignoring their Supervisors' academic feedback (32.6%)
- having unrealistic expectations around their Supervisors' capacity to provide feedback on their research (28.7%)
- misrepresenting their research background or capacity to undertake HDR level research (17.6%)

These issues were also frequently raised by Supervisors during interviews.

Supervisors reported that the Candidate behaviours, which had the most impact negatively affected their:

- relationship with their HDR candidate
- productivity
- mental or emotional wellbeing

Management of challenging behaviours

For the most impactful behaviours experienced in their supervisory relationships, approximately half of the survey Candidates indicated that they had sought support or advice.

- 49.8% (n=336) sought support or advice for behaviours that made them feel 'ignored, overlooked or uncared for'
- 46.2% (n=86) sought support or advice for Supervisor behaviours that were 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries'
- 53.6% (n=141) sought support or advice for Supervisor behaviours that made them feel 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against'

Supervisors also sought support or advice for the most impactful behaviours they experienced in their supervisory relationships.

- 47.7% (n=177) sought support or advice for Candidate behaviours that affected supervision practice
- 27.1% (n=16) sought support or advice for Candidate behaviours that were 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries'
- 55.6% (n=30) Supervisors sought support or advice for Candidate behaviours that made them feel 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against'

The types of support or advice commonly sought by the participants were:

- 'Fellow HDR candidate colleague / An academic or professional staff colleague'
- 'A member of my supervisory panel or review panel / A member of the Candidate's panel'
- 'Friend or family member'
- 'Postgraduate Coordinator'
- 'Professional support (e.g., counsellor, doctor)'

Candidates indicated whether they had made a formal report or complaint about the most impactful behaviour experienced. Very few Candidates made a formal report or complaint about the behaviours:

- 58 (8.6%) of Candidates who had experienced Supervisor behaviours that made them feel ignored, overlooked or uncared
- 18 (9.7%) of Candidates who had experienced Supervisor behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries
- 21 (8.0%) of Candidates who had experienced Supervisor behaviours that made them feel unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against

Similarly, only a small number of Supervisors made a formal report or complaint about the most impactful behaviours experienced:

- 28 (7.5%) of Supervisors who had experienced behaviours from their Candidates affecting their supervision practice
- 6 (10.2%) of Supervisors who had experienced behaviours from their Candidates that they felt crossed professional boundaries or were unprofessional

- 8 (14.8%) of Supervisors who had experienced behaviours from their Candidates that made them feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against.

For participants who did make a report or complaint, they most commonly made a report or complaint to the following:

- Postgraduate Coordinators
- Graduate Research School
- Head of School
- Postgraduate Dean

Of the Candidates who made a formal report or complaint about any of the behaviours, less than half of them (43.3%) had a representative from their university who explained the formal reporting or complaint processes to them, and only a quarter of them (26.8%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the process. Concerningly, about one in six (17.5%) of Candidates were informed of the outcome of their report or complaint, and less than half of them (41.2%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome.

For Supervisors who made a formal report or complaint, over half (57.1%) had a representative from their university explain the formal reporting or complaint processes to them. Over half (57.1%) of Supervisors indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the process, more than double the satisfaction rate of Candidates. Further in contrast to Candidates' experiences, most Supervisors (71.4%) were informed about the outcome of their report or complaint, and just over half (53.3%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome. As for Candidates' findings, these figures suggest that university reporting and complaints processes also require further attention from Supervisors' perspective.

Conclusion

Study findings showed that a large proportion of the Candidates and Supervisors who participated in this study found the supervision experience to be satisfying. The reasons provided for their satisfaction reflect and demonstrate the importance of interpersonal dynamics in engendering a positive experience such as the Candidates' responsiveness to Supervisors' guidance and the Supervisors' availability for Candidates' academic and personal needs. Conversely, and unsurprisingly, when these interpersonal dynamics did not provide the desired responsiveness and support or when the expectations were not met, the supervision experience was perceived to be unsatisfying, and possibly detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing, and obstacles to a successful HDR candidature.

The findings also draw attention to support needs of affected individuals as well as the effectiveness of university reporting processes in responding to and managing challenges and difficulties experienced. The findings affirmed the need for universities to make their policies and procedures to be clearer and more accessible.

This study offers universities valuable learnings and understanding of not only the types of challenging behaviours that can stymie candidatures and undermine supervisory relationships, but the experiences of affected Candidates and Supervisors and clarity into

how processes can be enhanced to ensure a positive and constructive supervision experience for both Candidates and Supervisors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nationally, there are over 66,000 Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates undertaking Doctorates or Masters by Research.² HDR candidates (Candidates) are engaged in different learning environments compared with coursework students, characterised by a strong reliance on their supervisors (e.g., to guide their studies and connect them to wider academic networks), and often work in shared study spaces or laboratories with other HDR candidates.

There is extensive research available in the literature that examined the role and competency of the supervisor, supervisory styles and approaches to supervising graduate research students in different countries.³ Research findings identify the characteristics of different supervisory styles⁴ and the utility of different styles at different times during the supervision period.⁵ Other researchers consider the extension of HDR supervision to mentorship and supporting Candidates in their broader career development.⁶

The literature emphasises the importance of a good supervisory relationship, identifying key elements for effective supervisory practice⁷ - for example, matching Candidates with Supervisors in relation to both topic expertise and interpersonal working relationships⁸, continuity of supervision in relation to Candidates' progress and satisfaction with supervision, noting that changes in supervisory arrangements could create problems and delays.⁹

In this context, the relationship between Candidates and their HDR supervisors (Supervisors) is complex, with significant consequences when problems arise. Candidates are anecdotally known to have distinct supervisory relationship challenges, but there is limited research examining these relationship challenges issues and how they are managed.

Research and surveys undertaken in recent years in Australia around unacceptable behaviours in university environments (e.g., the *Change the Course* report, the *National Student Safety Survey* report) have largely focused on undergraduate students, overlooking the experiences of the HDR cohort, particularly in the context of candidate-supervisor relationships.

1.1 Background

A study conducted by the Australian Human Rights Institute at the University of New South Wales, Sydney (UNSW) between 2018 and 2021 – *Understanding university responses to HDR candidate-supervisor relationship challenges* – was in response to the limited systematic research available about the incidence, impact and management of supervisory relationship issues in postgraduate research, either in Australia or internationally.

The study involved 47 anonymous interviews with professional and academic staff responsible for graduate research management across all Faculties at UNSW across both Sydney and Canberra and The University of Melbourne, in addition to representatives from central university services.

The study focused on the observations of professional and academic staff at the two universities pertaining to relationship issues commonly arising between Candidates and their Supervisors and how these issues were managed. The focus on professional and academic staff, rather than on Candidates and Supervisors themselves, was intentional. The number of first responders in the two universities was reasonably small and therefore it was relatively straightforward to access a representative cohort. Such staff had longitudinal experience of both Candidates and Supervisors and the workplace relationships that frequently arose between them.

Findings from the study confirmed there is a broad spectrum of issues arising between Candidates and their Supervisors, which can negatively affect the supervisory relationship. These issues include mismatched expectations, communication problems, bullying, supervisor and candidate performance, conflicts of interest, inappropriate relationships and attachments and sexual harassment and sexual assault. Interviews for this study also highlighted an emerging concern among staff around the mental health of Candidates and the perceived impact this had on the relationships with their Supervisors.

Moreover, findings show that relationship issues experienced by Candidates and Supervisors were commonly managed informally, or 'in-house', by more junior staff levels within Schools and Faculties, with escalation of issues to more senior staff or central university agencies only where necessary. These findings indicated that more extensive research into supervisory relationship issues, explicitly incorporating the views and experiences of Candidates and their Supervisors, is needed to further increase our understanding of issues and findings identified in this study.

1.2 Current study

Responding to the limited systematic research available about the incidence, impact and management of supervisory relationship issues in postgraduate research, either in Australia or internationally, this research was undertaken by the Australian Human Rights Institute and the Gender Violence Research Network (GVRN) at UNSW. The research incorporated two anonymous online surveys for Candidates and Supervisors, and individual interviews across 10 Australian universities.

The current study, conducted during 2023 and 2024, aims to extend the findings from the previous study by examining workplace relationship issues commonly arising between HDR candidates and supervisors in Australian universities, and how these issues are managed within these universities. This study will explore experiences of HDR candidates and supervisors pertaining to their supervisory relationships, particularly where there is neglect, or the supervisory relationship is blurred or abusive. It is anticipated that the accounts of Candidates and Supervisors collected through surveys and interviews will add rich data to that collected in the previous study and deepen our understanding around supervisory relationship issues.

The research questions underpinning the current study are:

1. What kind of workplace relationship issues are experienced between Candidates and their Supervisors?

- a. What is the incidence of these issues?
 - b. Are there discernible patterns in this incidence?
 - c. Can these patterns be attributed to particular factors?
2. How do institutions respond to and manage these relationship issues, from the perspective of (a) HDR candidates and (b) supervisors?

Ten universities representing all states and the Australian Capital Territory participated in and, along with the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR), contributed funding to the study. The participating universities were:

1. Australian National University (ANU)
2. James Cook University (JCU)
3. RMIT University (RMIT)
4. Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne)
5. (The) University of Adelaide (Adelaide)
6. (The) University of Melbourne (UoM)
7. University of New South Wales (UNSW)
8. (The) University of Sydney (USyd)
9. University of Tasmania (UTas)
10. (The) University of Western Australia (UWA)

These universities are situated in both metropolitan and regional areas and vary greatly in size. They include six Group of Eight universities and one university that is a member of the Australian Technology Network of Universities. In total, the 10 participating universities accounted for 41.5% of Australia's 2023 Postgraduate by Research Candidates.¹⁰

To gain a better understanding of the 10 participating universities, the research team obtained information about these universities that included their institutional characteristics (size, location, organisation of graduate research), research strengths and organisational structure, characteristics of Candidates cohort, relevant previous research and existing complaints processes, student support services for Candidates, and training programs for Supervisors. Further details about the supervisory arrangements at each of the participating universities can be found in Appendix A.

Findings detailed in this report are based on data collected from surveys submitted by 1,207 Candidates and 641 Supervisors, and the 30 Candidates and 30 Supervisors interviewed from the 10 universities.

2. METHODS

In this section, the study design, ethical approval, strategies employed for participant recruitment, methods used to collect data, and ways collected data were analysed are described and discussed.

2.1 Study design

The study employed a mixed-methods design involving two anonymous online surveys and an individual interview with selected survey participants. Participation was voluntary.

In obtaining the views of Candidates and Supervisors, a survey specific for Candidates and a separate one for Supervisors were developed to contextualise the issues for exploring their supervisory relationship experiences. The questions in the online surveys were informed by existing surveys that examined the needs of Candidates and aimed to collect information about the supervisory relationship from the perspectives of Candidates and Supervisors. The surveys elicited information about issues and experiences that shaped their sense of efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism, safety within the supervisory relationship, and how they responded to issues that negatively affected them – for example, whether they sought support and/or made formal reports, and their satisfaction with these pathways.

Informed by past research findings and issues identified by the participants, the individual interviews aimed to further explore participants' experiences of the supervisory relationship by obtaining nuanced accounts on issues encountered, how they sought to manage relationship challenges, what changes were needed to enhance their supervision, and how these changes could be implemented. A copy of the interview schedules can be found in Appendix B.

2.2 Ethics approval

Final ethics approval was obtained from UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in March 2024.¹¹ Most participating universities relied on UNSW's ethical clearance. UTas HREC provided approval for a Prior Approval ethics application on 27 March 2024.¹² JCU requested, and were provided with, the full documentation submitted to UNSW's ethics committee. Several participating universities pursued internal approval processes to administer the online surveys.

2.3 Participant recruitment

Separate to issuing a media release launching the study and employing social media to promote the study by the research team, representatives from the participating universities were contacted to seek their assistance for participant recruitment. Each participating university received a communications pack, which include a media release template, online platform text, social media tiles, and suggested messaging to promote the study locally. The graduate research schools (or equivalent) were also asked to promote the study on relevant online platforms (e.g., website, social media account or newsletter), explaining the two components of the research project (online surveys and interviews).

In addition to the recruitment activities as indicated, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), HDR coordinators, and HDR student representatives at participating universities were also contacted seeking their assistance in promoting the study. Graduate Deans (or equivalent) at participating universities were encouraged to distribute direct emails to their Candidates and Supervisors, explaining the local value of the research and encouraging participation in the online surveys.

Individual interview participants were recruited from Candidates and Supervisors who submitted their online surveys. After submitting their surveys, they were able to indicate, via a separate online expression of interest (Eoi) form, their willingness to participate in an individual interview with a member of the research team to further explore their supervisory relationship experiences. On this Eoi form, they provided their contact details and information to assist the research team to identify an appropriate mix of experiences (e.g., types of supervision issues).

Survey data and Eoi information were not connected, ensuring anonymity of survey participants.

2.4 Data collection

Separate links to the Candidates survey and Supervisors survey were used for the respective cohorts.

Survey data collection occurred between April 2024 and July 2024. The online surveys were made available to the 10 participating universities in a staggered manner due to administrative and logistical considerations specific to each university, and therefore it was imperative to make the surveys available to potential participants at a time that would maximise their uptake. The 10 participating universities were separated into two groups denoting as to when the online surveys would be made available.

Group 1 contained four universities (surveys were available from 8 April to 10 May), and Group 2 contained the other six universities (surveys were available from 6 May to 7 June). However, due to unforeseen circumstances, an extension until 7 July was given to Candidates and Supervisors from one of the Group 2 universities to complete their respective surveys. Table 1 lists the participating universities and the group in which they were allocated.

Table 1. Participating universities

Group 1	Group 2
James Cook University (JCU)	Australian National University (ANU)
Swinburn University of Technology (Swinburn)	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
University of Tasmania (UTas)	(The) University of Adelaide (Adelaide)
(The) University of Western Australia (UWA)	(The) The University of Melbourne (UoM)
	University of New South Wales (UNSW)
	(The)The University of Sydney (USyd)

Prior to seeing the first survey question, potential survey participants were required to respond to three eligibility questions regarding 1) their age (i.e., being 18 years or over), 2) the university in which they were enrolled for their HDR programs or providing supervision, and 3) whether they were located within Australia.

Individuals who responded 'yes' to all the eligibility questions were taken to the first survey question and were classed as participants. Individuals who responded 'no' to any of the three questions were taken to information about individuals the study aimed to recruit (i.e., those who meet the eligibility criteria), and were thanked for their interest.

At the end of the survey, participants were required to check the 'Submit' button to indicate they agreed to have the information they provided included in the dataset for analysis.

Only data from submitted surveys were analysed in the study. Data from incomplete surveys (i.e., not submitted) and surveys from participants who did not meet the eligibility criteria were not included in the dataset for analysis.

It should be noted that not all questions in the surveys were mandatory, which means not all participants responded to every question in the surveys. Percentage data presented are based on the number of participants who had responded to the questions asked.

Data collection from individual interviews occurred between 22 May and 2 August via either Teams or Zoom. The length of the interviews ranged between 25 and 70 minutes.

2.5 Data analysis

2.5.1 Surveys

Online survey data collected from Candidates and Supervisors were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program (v.28). The data collected (raw data) were reviewed, cleaned (e.g., checked for duplicate cases, ensured data were formatted correctly, managed unclear or invalid data, coded open-ended data where possible) and recoded into SPSS format before analyses were conducted.

Analyses were conducted for the entire participant group (i.e., both Candidates and Supervisors), and separately for the two cohorts. Analyses focused on univariate analyses and results were presented as descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means, percentages), and cross tabulations stratified by demographics and challenging behaviours experienced in supervision relationships. Univariate associations were examined using chi-square (χ^2) and logistic regression analysis.

NVivo software package (v.12) was used to code participants' responses to open-ended questions that were long, rich, and nuanced to identify themes pertinent to their supervisory relationship experiences.

2.5.2 Individual interviews

Participants provided consent for the interviews to be audio recorded. The interviews were transcribed by an external professional transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement prior to the provision of files.

Data collected from the individual interviews were progressively cleaned, coded and analysed between July and September 2024 using NVivo qualitative analysis software (v.12). The data were analysed in three phases – 1) a data clean and familiarisation phase, 2) an initial coding phase, and 3) then a further phase connecting the coded data to identify categories and develop themes.

3. PARTICIPANTS

In total, 1,848 Candidates and Supervisors participated in the study. Almost two-thirds were Candidates (65.3%) and just over a third were Supervisors (34.7%).

Recruitment activities with the 10 participating universities involved more than 45,000 study invitation emails, which included study information and online survey links. After receiving their respective invitations, 1,952 Candidates and 912 Supervisors accessed their online surveys via the provided links, resulting in 1,207 Candidates and 641 Supervisors submitting their surveys.

Based on the numbers of Candidates and Supervisors who submitted their surveys, the overall response rate was 4.8% (1,207/25,229) for Candidates, and 3.1% (641/20,997) for Supervisors. The response rates for each of the 10 participating universities are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Response rate by universities

	Candidates			Supervisors		
	Submitted Survey	Email invitations	Response Rate	Submitted Survey	Email invitations	Response Rate
ANU	161	2,953	5.5%	69	1,756	3.9%
JCU	41	795	5.2%	11	883	1.2%
RMIT	65	2,393	2.7%	33	1,486	2.2%
Swinburne	49	981	5.0%	55	628	8.8%
Adelaide	83	2,304	3.6%	42	2,998	1.4%
UoM	267	5,358	5.0%	129	4,748	2.7%
UNSW	232	3,702	6.3%	112	2,478	4.5%
USyd	79	3,851	2.1%	60	3,862	1.6%
UTas	88	1,172	7.5%	50	972	5.1%
UWA	142	1,720	8.3%	80	1,186	6.7%
Total	1,207	25,229	4.8%	641	20,997	3.1%

For the individual interviews, the research team reviewed received EoI forms to identify prospective participants. The study received EoI forms from 296 Candidates and 96 Supervisors. In total, 60 individual interviews were conducted, which comprised of three Candidates from each of the 10 participating universities, and three supervisors at most of the 10 participating universities.¹³

Participants were selected by the research team to reflect a variety of supervisory issues and a range of academic disciplines. For Candidates, the research team also sought to include international student perspectives and Candidates from different higher degree research programs. Following data collection, the research team emailed survey participants who had indicated their interest in being interviewed, but were not selected, to thank them for their interest.

3.1 Overview of study participants – Surveys

In this section, demographic characteristics of the 1,848 Candidates and Supervisors are presented to provide a study participant profile. Some characteristics are presented collectively as they were gathered from both cohorts (Table 3), and others are presented separately as they are characteristics unique to the cohorts (Tables 4 and 5).

Only some selected demographic characteristics are presented and in condensed form for brevity. A complete and detailed description of participant demographic characteristics can be found in Appendix C.

Table 3. Selected and condensed participant demographic characteristics (Candidates and Supervisors)

		Candidates* n (%)	Supervisors* n (%)
Age	≤ 29	435 (36.0%)	5 (0.8%)
	30 – 39	441 (36.5%)	91 (14.2%)
	40 – 49	163 (13.5%)	175 (27.3%)
	50 – 59	86 (7.1%)	200 (31.2%)
	≥ 60	42 (3.4%)	130 (20.2%)
Gender identity	Woman or female	776 (64.3%)	356 (55.5%)
	Man or male	382 (31.6%)	268 (41.8%)
	Non-binary/different identity	34 (2.8%)	7 (1.1%)
Identifies as LGBTQA+	Yes	271 (22.5%)	70 (10.9%)
	No	874 (72.4%)	529 (82.5%)
Birthplace	Australia	596 (49.4%)	347 (51.5%)
	Overseas	577 (47.8%)	276 (43.1%)
Cultural background**	Indigenous Australian	10 (0.8%)	5 (0.8%)
	Australian (excluding Indigenous Australian)	471 (39.0%)	298 (46.5%)
	Non-Australian	937 (77.6%)	405 (63.2%)
Language background	English first language	771 (63.9%)	502 (78.3%)
	Non-English first language	408 (33.8%)	129 (20.1%)

* Percentages do not add to 100 as ‘prefer not to answer’, ‘unsure’, or unclear responses are not included.

** Participants were able to indicate more than one cultural background.

Participant responses indicate that almost three-quarters (876, 72.6%) of Candidates were in the younger age groups (i.e., ≤ 29, 30-39), and over three-quarters (505, 78.8%) of Supervisors were in the older age groups (i.e., from 40-49, 50-59, and ≥ 60). Six in 10 participants (1,132, 61.3%) identified as ‘woman or female’, and more than one in three participants (650, 35.2%) identified as ‘man or male’. A small number of participants (42, 2.2%) identified as either non-binary or a different identity. Less than one in five participants (341, 18.5%) identified as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual communities (LGBQA+).

Slightly over half of the participants (943, 51.0%) indicated that they were born in Australia and over two-thirds (1,273 68.9%) indicated English as their first language. Regarding their cultural backgrounds, participants were able to identify more than one, and their responses indicated that almost three-quarters (1,342, 72.6%) of participants identified as from, or included, a non-Australian cultural background.

Specific to Candidates, Table 4 denotes some information they provided relating to their HDR program.

Table 4. Candidate specific information

		n (%)
Residential status	Domestic	813 (67.4%)
	International	394 (32.6%)
Program type	PhD	1115 (92.4%)
	Masters by research/Professional Doctorate/Combined program	92 (7.6%)
Enrollment type	Full-time	909 (75.3%)
	Part-time	280 (23.3%)
	On program leave	18 (1.5%)
Years of higher degree research completed	1 – 2 years	705 (58.4%)
	3 – 4 years	390 (32.3%)
	5+ years	112 (9.3%)
Number of supervisors	1	54 (4.5%)
	2	498 (41.3%)
	3	478 (39.6%)
	≥ 4	177 (14.7%)
Supervision meeting mode	In-person	472 (39.1%)
	Online (e.g., Zoom, Teams, Telephone)	392 (32.5%)
	Mixed	343 (28.4%)
Supervision meeting format	One-on-one	638 (52.9%)
	With other Supervisors	507 (42.0%)
	With other Candidates	35 (2.9%)
	With other Supervisors and other Candidates	27 (2.2%)
Supervision agreement or contract setting out expectations for HDR candidature	Yes	609 (50.5%)
	No	378 (31.3%)
	Unsure	220 (18.2%)
Diagnosed with a disability or chronic illness that can affect HDR candidature	Yes	265 (22.0%)
	No	910 (75.4%)
	Prefer not to answer	32 (2.6%)

The ratio of domestic Candidates (813, 67.4%) to international Candidates (394, 32.6%) who participated in the study is two to one. Almost all (1,115, 92.4%) Candidates indicated that they were enrolled in a PhD program, and most (909, 75.3%) were enrolled in their HDR programs on a full-time basis. The Candidates in the study were mostly those who were early in their candidatures with over half (705, 58.4%) having only completed one or two years. Over one in five Candidates (265, 22.0%) indicated that they live with a disability or chronic illness which can affect their HDR candidature.

Almost all Candidates (1,153, 95.5%) indicated that they have multiple supervisors for their candidature with two Supervisors being the most common (498, 41.3%). Only 54 Candidates (4.5%), representing nine of the universities, indicated that they have one supervisor.

For the 609 Candidates who had a supervision agreement or contract, over three-quarters agreed or strongly agreed (469, 77.0%) that they adhered closely to the agreement or contract. When asked about their perceptions of their supervisors, about two-thirds agreed

or strongly agreed (404, 66.3%) that their supervisors adhered closely to the agreement or contract.

Supervisors who participated in the study were asked to provide information about their employment and supervision responsibilities. Some of the information provided is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Supervisor specific information

		n (%)
Academic level*	Level A	20 (3.1%)
	Level B	84 (13.1%)
	Level C	151 (23.6%)
	Level D	159 (24.8%)
	Level E	218 (34.0%)
	Unclear response	9 (1.4%)
Length of time supervising HDR candidates	1 – 5 years	148 (23.1%)
	6 – 10 years	157 (24.5%)
	11 – 15 years	132 (20.6%)
	16+ years	204 (31.8%)
Number of current HDR candidates	1 or 2	186 (29.0%)
	3 or 4	218 (34.0%)
	5 or more	237 (37.0%)
Supervision meeting mode	In-person	269 (42.0%)
	Online (e.g., Zoom, Teams, Telephone)	135 (21.0%)
	Mixed	237 (37.0%)
Supervision meeting format	One-on-one	226 (35.3%)
	With other Supervisors	392 (61.1%)
	With other Candidates	7 (1.1%)
	With other Supervisors and other Candidates	16 (2.5%)
Supervision agreement or contract setting out expectations for HDR candidature	Yes (for all Candidates)	227 (35.4%)
	Yes (for some Candidates)	75 (11.7%)
	No	280 (43.7%)
	Unsure	59 (9.2%)
Number of Candidates supervised to completion	0	80 (12.5%)
	1 – 5	208 (32.4%)
	6 – 10	139 (21.7%)
	> 10	214 (33.4%)
Length of time employed at their university	Less than 1 year	11 (1.7%)
	1 – 5 years	129 (20.1%)
	6 – 10 years	152 (23.7%)
	11 – 15 years	131 (20.4%)
	16+ years	218 (34.0%)
Employment type	Permanent	479 (74.7%)
	Fixed-term contract	148 (23.1%)
	Casual	14 (2.2%)

The most notable aspects of the Supervisors cohort are its seniority within an academic setting and being highly experienced in providing HDR supervision. More than four in five (528, 82.4%) Supervisors were senior academics (i.e., Levels C, D, and E). Over three-quarters (493, 76.9%) of Supervisors have provided supervision for at least six year or more, with almost a third (204, 31.8%) having provided supervision for 16 or more years. Seven in 10 Supervisors (455, 71.0%) indicated they were supervising three or more Candidates, and

over half (353, 55.1%) have supervised at least six Candidates to completion. Three-quarters of Supervisors (479, 74.7%) were employed on a permanent basis, and about four in five (501, 78.2%) have been employed at their universities for at least six years.

For the 302 Supervisors who had an agreement or contract with their Candidates, more than eight in 10 agreed or strong agreed (261, 86.4%) that they closely adhere to the agreement or contract. Just over seven in 10 Supervisors agreed or strongly agreed (218, 72.2%) that their Candidates closely adhere to their agreement or contract.

3.2 Overview of study participants – Interviews

The 60 participants interviewed comprised of 30 Candidates (19 females, 11 males) and 30 Supervisors (14 females, 16 males) across all 10 participating universities. The Candidate cohort included 19 domestic and 11 international Candidates. The majority (28) of Candidates interviewed were PhD candidates, with one Professional Doctorate candidate and one Masters by research student. To de-identify all interview data, each participant was allocated a unique identifier.

Table 6 shows the academic discipline or field identified by Candidates and Supervisors interviewed.

Table 6. Academic discipline of Candidates and Supervisors interviewed

	Candidates	Supervisors
Agriculture and environmental studies	2	1
Architecture and built environment	2	1
Business and management	1	1
Communications	1	-
Creative arts	1	1
Dentistry	-	1
Engineering	5	3
Health services and support	-	2
Humanities, culture and social sciences	6	4
Law and paralegal studies	1	1
Medicine	1	6
Psychology	2	1
Rehabilitation	1	-
Science and mathematics	5	5
Social work	1	1
Teacher education	1	2

4. RESULTS

The results presented are based on analyses of survey responses provided by 1,207 Candidates and 641 Supervisors as well as individual interview with 30 Candidates and 30 Supervisors. Analyses of survey responses and interviews are presented together where appropriate to present a comprehensive and coherent analysis of the HDR supervision experiences as reflected by Candidates and Supervisors who participated in this study.

The report's key findings are organised around seven themes:

1. Academic environment
2. Supervision related training – Candidates and Supervisors
3. HDR supervision experience
4. Candidate experiences of challenging behaviours in the supervisory relationship
5. Supervisor experiences of challenging behaviours in the supervisory relationship
6. Effects of challenging behaviours on Candidates and Supervisors
7. Management of challenging behaviours

4.1 Academic environment

The academic environment (e.g., the Faculty, School, Centre, Unit, or Lab) in which Candidates complete their research and Supervisors provide HDR supervision can affect the quality of the overall supervision experience. It was in this context that the study included survey questions that specifically aimed to elicit information from participants about their perceptions and experiences of their academic environment. These questions focused on the perceived work culture, interpersonal dynamics, and the general sense they had about their individual work situations and contexts. Participants' responses offered an insight into the work culture that shaped their perceptions and interactions with others, and in turn, their supervisory experience.

Five statements were presented to both Candidates and Supervisors (Statements 1-5), one statement focused on sense of safety, but was phrased differently for the two cohorts (Statement 6), and two statements were specific for Supervisors (Statements 7-8).

- Statement 1 (**S1**): Staff behave in a respectful way towards others
- Statement 2 (**S2**): HDR candidates behave in a respectful way towards others
- Statement 3 (**S3**): My academic environment is diverse and inclusive
- Statement 4 (**S4**): Staff and HDR candidates are treated fairly and equally, regardless of their personal characteristics such as sex, gender, age, race or cultural background, sexual orientation, disability or religious beliefs
- Statement 5 (**S5**): Complaints about inappropriate behaviour are taken seriously
- Statement 6 (**S6**): I feel safe being in my academic environment late at night or on weekends (**Candidates version**)
I feel safe working late at night or on weekends in my Faculty/School/Centre/Unit/Lab (**Supervisors version**)
- Statement 7 (**S7**): Staff in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful behaviour (**Supervisors only**)

Statement 8 (S8): I feel confident to speak if I don't agree with something that my senior colleagues have said or done (Supervisors only)

Table 7 below shows the distribution of responses to the eight statements about the respondents' academic environment.

Table 7. Distribution of responses to importance of supervisor attributes

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		No response	
	Can	Sup	Can	Sup	Can	Sup	Can	Sup	Can	Sup	Can	Sup
S1	16 (1.3%)	9 (1.4%)	76 (6.3%)	20 (3.1%)	96 (7.9%)	44 (6.9%)	561 (46.5%)	381 (59.4%)	457 (37.9%)	187 (29.2%)	1 (0.1%)	-
S2	4 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)	23 (1.9%)	13 (2.0%)	101 (8.4%)	39 (6.1%)	534 (44.2%)	384 (59.9%)	543 (45.0%)	202 (31.5%)	2 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)
S3	19 (1.6%)	7 (1.1%)	119 (9.9%)	40 (6.2%)	204 (16.9%)	84 (13.1%)	483 (40.0%)	331 (51.6%)	378 (31.3%)	178 (27.8%)	4 (0.3%)	1 (0.2%)
S4	39 (3.2%)	9 (1.4%)	134 (11.1%)	57 (8.9%)	216 (17.9%)	68 (10.6%)	429 (35.5%)	294 (45.9%)	388 (32.2%)	213 (33.2%)	1 (0.1%)	-
S5	58 (4.8%)	13 (2.0%)	126 (10.4%)	59 (9.2%)	390 (32.3%)	96 (15.0%)	356 (29.5%)	256 (39.9%)	266 (22.1%)	216 (33.7%)	11 (0.9%)	1 (0.2%)
S6	17 (1.4%)	16 (2.5%)	49 (4.1%)	39 (6.1%)	202 (16.7%)	87 (13.6%)	439 (36.4%)	244 (38.1%)	496 (41.1%)	254 (39.6%)	4 (0.3%)	1 (0.2%)
S7	N/A	16 (2.5%)	N/A	41 (6.4%)	N/A	83 (12.9%)	N/A	288 (44.9%)	N/A	212 (33.1%)	N/A	1 (0.2%)
S8	N/A	27 (4.2%)	N/A	80 (12.5%)	N/A	94 (14.7%)	N/A	245 (38.2%)	N/A	195 (30.4%)	N/A	-

Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that people behave respectfully towards each other in their academic environment, the environment in which they work is diverse and inclusive, and they feel safe in their environment (Statements 1-3 and 6). More Supervisors than Candidates indicated that they perceive people are treated fairly and equally regardless of their personal characteristics, and that complaints about inappropriate behaviour are taken seriously (Statements 4-5). Supervisors' responses to the two statements specific for them indicate that whilst almost eight in 10 Supervisors agreed that staff in leadership roles promote and encourage respectful behaviours (500, 78.0%) (Statement 7), only two-thirds (440, 68.6%) indicated that they feel confident to speak should they disagree with something that their senior colleagues have said or done (Statement 8).

4.2 Supervision related training – Candidates and Supervisors

Information or training received by Candidates and Supervisors that aimed to promote a positive academic environment and supervision experience were examined to gain an understanding of their knowledge in recognising challenging and inappropriate behaviours in supervision. Whilst Supervisors were asked about the range of information or training that they have received on supervision related matters including acceptable and respectful behaviours, Candidates were only asked specifically about the information or training received on acceptable and respectful behaviours.

4.2.1 Candidate training

Almost three-quarters of Candidate survey participants (873, 72.3%) indicated that their university had provided them with information or training on acceptable and respectful behaviours. About one in five (229, 19.0%) were unsure if their university had provided information or training, and about one in 12 (104, 8.6%) indicated they had not received this information.

On receiving the information or being offered the training on acceptable and respectful behaviours, two-thirds of Candidates (801, 66.4%) either read the information or attended the training. The other third of Candidates included those who either had not read the information or attended the training (32, 2.7%), were unsure (39, 3.2%), or did not provide any information (334, 27.7%).

In the individual interviews, some Candidates suggested that more guidance was required around the requirements of a HDR program (e.g., “they had no clarity of onboarding a new HDR student”). In contrast to the survey data on receiving information or training on acceptable and respectful behaviours, some Candidates highlighted the need for practical training on Candidate-Supervisor relationships, on what Supervisor behaviours are not acceptable, how to identify inadequate supervision practices, and on how to speak out if they experience any negative behaviour. Candidates suggested that this training could be provided in-person or online and could include Q&A sessions provided during HDR orientation.

4.2.2 Supervisor training

Almost all Supervisor survey participants (625, 97.5%) had attended training relating to their roles as academics and Supervisors. As shown in Table 8, the most common types of training attended by Supervisors included training relating to ‘university expectations relating to HDR supervision’ (536, 83.6%), ‘maintaining research integrity’ (480, 74.9%), and ‘acceptable and respectful behaviours’ (427, 66.6%).

Table 8. Training attended by Supervisors

Training Attended	n=641
University expectations relating to HDR supervision	536 (83.6%)
Maintaining research integrity	480 (74.9%)
Acceptable and respectful behaviours	427 (66.6%)
Managing expectations around HDR candidature	370 (57.7%)
Managing conflicts of interest	348 (54.3%)
Respecting cultural differences	332 (51.8%)
Effective communication with HDR candidates	276 (43.1%)
Responding sensitively to student disclosures (e.g., mental health challenges, gendered violence)	231 (36.0%)
Managing HDR candidate relationship issues	219 (34.2%)

*Supervisors were able to select more than one type of training

In contrast to survey responses on information and training received, several Supervisors said during their interviews that they were ill-equipped for their role due to not receiving any training relating to HDR supervision. One reported that they “have had zero training for any of the roles that I’ve been in.” Another Supervisor stated “I don’t think I’ve had explicit training throughout this journey. It’s mostly been like what did I learn from my PhD.” Interview participants also noted that time constraints were a barrier to attending training, with one noting “we have so many things on our plate we don’t have time.” Some Supervisors interviewed recognised that the colleagues most needing training often did not attend sessions on offer (e.g., “the ego’s there and “I’m, I’m so successful”, it’s really hard to get people to change.”)

4.3 HDR supervision experience

Each participating university has its own supervision requirements, arrangements, and terminologies for their HDR programs (see Appendix A). The findings presented regarding participants’ perceptions and experiences of their own university’s academic environments, administrative and logistical matters relating to their supervision arrangements, and the types of training undertaken can potentially influence how participants engage with their HDR supervision and their overall experience. In exploring participants’ overall supervision experience, their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with supervision is examined by focusing on aspects of supervision that affect its perceived quality and utility.

4.3.1 Satisfaction/dissatisfaction with supervision

Most Candidates and Supervisors in the study indicated that they were satisfied with their current HDR supervision experience. As shown in Figure 1, 856 (70.9%) Candidates and 544 (84.9%) Supervisors indicated that they were either ‘Satisfied’ (Candidates – 359, 29.7%, Supervisors – 338, 52.7%) or ‘Very satisfied’ (Candidates – 497, 41.2%, Supervisors – 206, 32.1%). However, more Candidates overall indicated that they were dissatisfied than Supervisors. Almost one in five Candidates indicated that they were either ‘Dissatisfied’ (158, 13.1%) or ‘Very dissatisfied’ (5.2%) with their supervision experience, but only one in 20 of Supervisors indicated the same (‘Dissatisfied’ – 32, 5.0%, ‘Very dissatisfied – 5, 0.8%). About one in 10 Candidates (130, 10.8%) and Supervisors (60, 9.4%) indicated that they were ‘Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’.

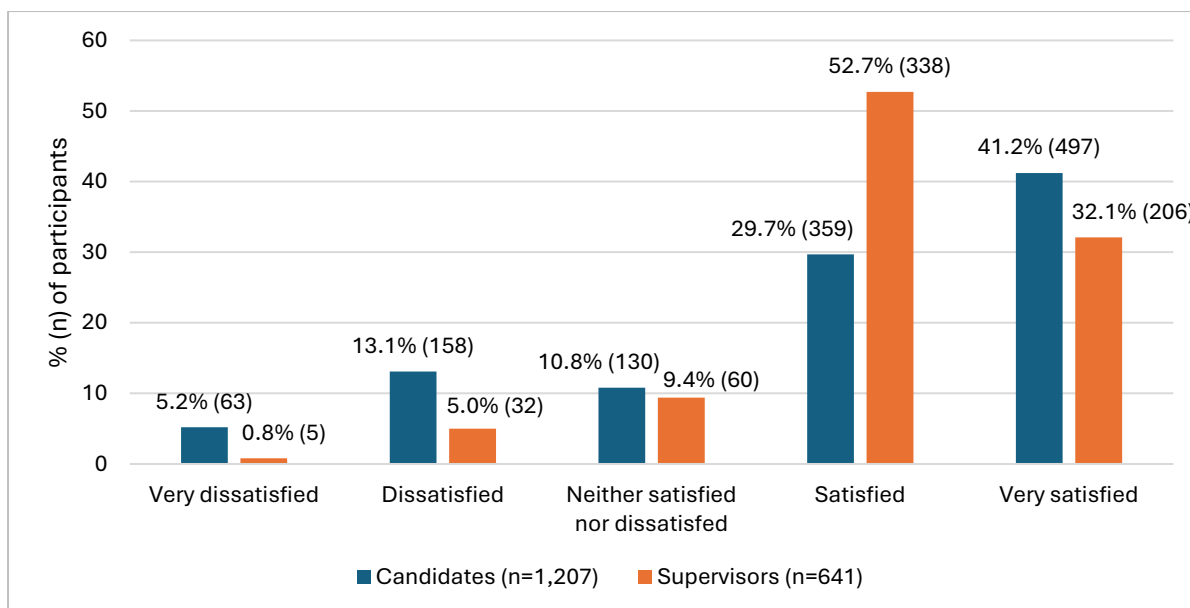


Figure 1. Dis/satisfaction with supervision (Candidates and Supervisors)

Factors contributing to supervision dis/satisfaction – Candidates

In exploring circumstances that enhanced Candidates' supervision experience, they were asked about supportive behaviours they observed in their Supervisors. Table 9 shows Candidates' responses to a supplied list of five statements pertaining to possible support provided by Supervisors. Their responses indicated that at least seven in 10 Candidates have 'Often' or 'Always' observed all the listed supportive behaviours in their Supervisors.

Table 9. Supervisors' behaviours observed by Candidates in their supervisory experience

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Unsure	Prefer not to answer
Ensuring I have the resources to complete my higher degree research	35 (2.9%)	87 (7.2%)	210 (17.4%)	304 (25.2%)	550 (45.6%)	16 (1.3%)	5 (0.4%)
Responding appropriately when I raise issues or concerns (e.g., physical health, mental health and/or wellbeing)	32 (2.7%)	78 (6.5%)	146 (12.1%)	237 (19.6%)	664 (55.0%)	39 (3.2%)	11 (0.9%)
Behaving consistently in response to knowledge of my personal circumstances (e.g., mental health challenges)	46 (3.8%)	97 (8.0%)	141 (11.7%)	250 (20.7%)	603 (50.0%)	53 (4.4%)	17 (1.4%)
Behaving with respect in their actions and language	17 (1.4%)	42 (3.5%)	136 (11.3%)	223 (18.5%)	763 (63.2%)	16 (1.3%)	10 (0.8%)
Being respectful of my time and other commitments	35 (2.9%)	81 (6.7%)	166 (13.8%)	239 (19.8%)	659 (54.6%)	16 (1.3%)	11 (0.9%)

About eight in 10 (942, 78.0%) Candidates provided further information about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their current supervision experience. For example:

- Supervisors' knowledge and expertise in relation to Candidates' research topic
- Communicating clear expectations
- Providing Candidates' with autonomy over their research project
- Ensuring that Candidates' feel prioritised by being available for meetings, responding to emails, providing feedback on drafts, and being responsive to other matters that may arise.
- Facilitating access to resources, providing professional development opportunities, and assisting in building their academic networks
- Taking an interest in the Candidate's wellbeing and being understanding of work, family and other commitments
- Being supportive in responding to Candidate health and personal challenges

Whilst Candidates identified a range of factors that enhanced their supervision experience, as shown in Figure 1 above, almost one in five Candidates (221, 18.3%) indicated that they were either 'dissatisfied' (158, 13.1%) or 'very dissatisfied' (63, 5.2%) with their supervision. They reported a range of issues that contributed to their dissatisfaction including, but not limited to, the following:

- Supervisors not having the requisite expertise to support their candidature
- Problematic dynamics within the supervisory team, such as supervisory relationships that are competitive or combative
- A lack of guidance, direction or structure from Supervisors
- Supervisors controlling or micro-managing the Candidate's research project and undermining their sense of agency
- Supervisors being 'too busy' for supervision meetings
- Supervisors failing to provide timely or detailed feedback on their work
- Supervisors being unsupportive of the Candidate's personal circumstances, such as work and family commitments

To further explore factors that Candidates perceived to have contributed to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their supervision experience, the issue of supervision continuity was given focus to determine possible effects this might have on Candidates.

Supervision continuity

Two-thirds of Candidates indicated that they had stable supervisory arrangements with no changes to their Supervisors (826, 68.4%). Just under a third of Candidates (381, 31.6%) had at least one of their Supervisors changed since commencing their HDR program. When this occurred, about three in 10 Candidates indicated that the change involved their Primary or Principal supervisor. More than half indicated that it was their Supervisor who initiated the change (208, 54.6%) whilst over a quarter indicated that the Candidate themselves had initiated the change (108, 28.3%).

From a supplied list, Candidates were able to select single or multiple possible reasons that led to the change in their supervision arrangements. The most common reasons indicated were:

- Supervisor(s) left the university (e.g., change jobs, retired) (176, 46.2%)

- Supervisory performance issues (81, 21.3%)
- Change in direction of my higher degree research (76, 19.9%)
- Communication issues (67, 17.6%)
- Mismatched expectations (52, 13.6%)

Whilst some Candidates indicated that changes to their Supervisors did not affect their HDR program (40, 10.5%), both positive and negative effects resulting from changes were indicated by other Candidates, and are shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Effects on Candidates resulting from supervisor change

	n=381*
I was able to continue with my HDR program	211 (55.4%)
It improved my supervision experience	147 (38.6%)
It helped with my higher degree research	121 (31.8%)
I was able to work with someone with greater expertise	117 (30.7%)
It delayed my HDR progression	105 (27.6%)
It negatively affected my higher degree research	63 (16.5%)
It diminished the quality of my supervision experience	59 (15.5%)
I feel less confident about my higher degree research	54 (14.2%)
It affected my physical or mental health	11 (2.9%)
I was unable to get appropriate support or advice for my research	8 (2.1%)
I was able to work with someone more suitable	4 (1.0%)
The issues raised were not addressed	4 (1.0%)
I had to change programs/faculties/universities	2 (0.5%)
Created more work for the Candidates and remaining Supervisor(s)	1 (0.3%)

* Candidates were able to indicate more than one effect.

Despite the possible need to change Supervisors and the positive effects resulting from the change, several Candidates highlighted during their individual interviews that the decision to change Supervisors was not straightforward, especially if they were the ones who would like to initiate the change. For example:

If you'd asked to change supervisors ... they might feel offended. They might feel their reputation is somehow besmirched because people will hear that you don't want to be supervised by them. And so you don't know what their reaction will be. And it feels like it could easily be negative and there could be consequences for you (Candidate Interview 22, female, PhD, International student).

It should be noted that in some instances, changes in Supervisors were the results of them withdrawing or being removed from a supervisory role. In their survey responses, a quarter of Supervisors (169, 26.4%) indicated that they had withdrawn or been removed from a supervisory role in the past. Of these, about half (83, 49.1%) were in a Primary supervisor role. Table 11 shows the reasons indicated by Supervisors from a supplied list for their withdrawal or removal. Notably, whilst Candidates' performance issues

a third of Supervisors withdrawing (51, 37.2%) or being removed 11 (34.4%) attributed this to relationship challenges with Candidates.

Table 11. Reasons for Supervisors withdrawing or being removed from supervisory role

	Withdrawn (n=137)*	Removed (n=32)*
HDR candidate performance issues	66 (48.2%)	11 (34.4%)
Relationship challenges with the HDR candidate	51 (37.2%)	11 (34.4%)
Change in direction of the HDR candidate's research	33 (24.1%)	13 (40.6%)
Mismatched expectations	32 (23.4%)	6 (18.8%)
I left the university (e.g., change jobs, retired), went or leave, or other employment issues	22 (16.1%)	5 (15.6%)
Communication issues	19 (13.9%)	3 (9.4%)
I was overcommitted	15 (10.9%)	1 (3.1%)
I was no longer needed as a supervisor	5 (3.6%)	1 (3.1%)
Relationship challenges with other supervisors	4 (2.9%)	-
HDR candidate left the university or withdrew	2 (1.5%)	1 (3.1%)

* Supervisors were able to select more than one option for their withdrawal or removal.

Findings on the prevalence of Supervisors withdrawing or being removed from their supervisory roles showed that there can be factors inherent in the process of providing HDR supervision which can affect their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with supervision.

Factors contributing to supervision dis/satisfaction – Supervisors

More than three-quarters (492, 76.8%) of Supervisors provided information about issues and factors they perceived to have contributed to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their current supervision experience.

There were a range of reasons offered by Supervisors that contributed to their satisfaction with their supervision experience. For example, the support from colleagues on the supervisory teams and those provided by the university. Other reasons cited for Supervision satisfaction were those concerned with the relational dynamics between them and their Candidates. In their surveys and interview accounts, they cited “good rapport”, “open”, “respectful”, “collaborative” relationships with their Candidates, and “personal and intellectual connection” as satisfying.

Supervisors’ responses suggested that satisfying supervision was with Candidates who were “dedicated”, “motivated”, “engaged”, “hard-working” and “professional”. In this regard, they valued Candidates who were “good communicators”, understood “the roles of the work”, were prepared for meetings, responded well to feedback, and “helpful in providing feedback back to us on how we can best support them.” Supervisors also emphasised the importance of clearly articulated and consistent expectations with Candidates as reasons for their satisfaction.

Some Supervisors in their responses recognised that Candidates came from varied backgrounds and their personal needs might change over the course of their candidatures

necessitating a “tailor each experience” approach. This might include adapting the level of autonomy provided to Candidates as “some students are better at driving their own project, [and] others need more guidance”.

In contrast to Candidates’ responses, a notably smaller numbers of Supervisors indicated that they were either ‘dissatisfied’ (32, 5.0%) or ‘very dissatisfied’ (5, 0.8%) with their supervision experience (Figure 1). Some examples of issues offered by Supervisors for their dissatisfaction were related to relational dynamics with Candidates, administrative issues and tasks that adversely affected their capacity to engage in supervision, the demands placed on Supervisors, and for some Supervisors, their perception of supervision work being undervalued or unrecognised by their university. Other issues Supervisors identified were about the expectations the Candidates placed on them with regards to their availability and the support they were to provide and the need to provide “pastoral care, mentoring as well as intellectual supervision, amount of feedback for each [Candidate] – all of these factors mean supervision takes up a lot of my time”.

4.3.2 Power imbalances in the supervisory relationship

Power dynamics between Candidates and Supervisors, and between Supervisors themselves, were issues raised during interviews by both Candidates and Supervisors that affected their level of satisfaction in their supervisory relationships. The perceived power that Supervisors hold, and the potential consequence of that power on Candidates can be profound (e.g., “[The supervisor has] a lot of power over you because ... they’re the ones that provide the recommendations in the milestone about you continuing”).

Some Supervisors acknowledged the potential challenges faced by Candidates and their willingness to address the perceived and real power dynamics inherent in the supervisory relationship.

I’m also mindful, you know, there is a power dynamic ... I’m professor and they’re PhD candidate, so I try to create an environment where people can, if they’ve got concerns, they can raise them (Supervisor Interview 1, male).

Both Candidates and Supervisors described the complex relationships between Supervisors and their supervisory panel colleagues who were also panel review members, postgraduate coordinators, Heads of School or research collaborators, and the dissatisfaction that this can caused in the supervisory relationship. Candidates relayed how these dynamics impacted on some Supervisors’ willingness to intervene when issues arose, recognising deep reluctance “to rock the boat”, “burn bridges” or “step on toes.” Tangible consequences for Candidates when their Supervisors held another role.

So, it was the double whammy because [the Supervisor] was wearing two hats ... it just felt like I had to tippy-toe around those power plays ... those dynamics. And it compromised everyone. In the end, we were all miserable because we all felt uncomfortable by the arrangement (Candidate Interview 12, female, PhD, domestic student).

4.3.3 Improving the supervision experience

Notwithstanding the factors that both Candidates and Supervisors identified that can affect their supervisory experience, they also offered their views on ways that their university could further improve the supervisory experience. From a list specific for Candidates (11 statements) and one for Supervisors (12 statements), they were asked to identify the three most important qualities for their university (ranking them as 1, 2, or 3). Valid responses were received from 1,089 (90.2%) and 622 (97.0%) Supervisors.

Table 12 shows the items on the two different lists, and the numbers of Candidates and Supervisors who selected the statement as one of the three most important qualities they want from their university. Their responses indicated that Candidates ranked qualities pertaining to the university considering their needs, vulnerabilities, and how they can be supported as being the most important in further improving their experience. For Supervisors, they ranked qualities pertaining to appropriate selection of Candidates, measures to establish agreed understanding of expectations, and support for Supervisors as being the most important.

Table 12. Ways universities can improve supervisory experience (Candidates and Supervisors)

Candidates Statements (n=1,089)	Ranked 1, 2, or 3	Supervisors Statements (n=622)	Ranked 1, 2, or 3
Considers all aspects of my needs (both personal and academic)	473 (43.4%)	A robust and transparent process for recruiting, screening, and selecting HDR candidates	242 (38.9%)
Understands why HDR candidates can be vulnerable in HDR supervisory relationships	407 (37.4%)	Pre-emptive Faculty/School measures to establish agreed understanding of expectations between candidates and supervisors	208 (33.4%)
Offers different ways of helping me, and does not focus on academic work alone	368 (33.8%)	Good practice guides and skill-based training for supervisors	206 (33.1%)
Provides support in ways that show it understands that needs can change and required support has to be adjusted accordingly	357 (32.8%)	Communities of practice for supervisors to connect, discuss supervision issues, and support each other	190 (30.5%)
Has a transparent process making it clear what happens when a report or complaint is made	319 (29.3%)	Systems in place to ensure supervisors are accountable for their performance	152 (24.4%)
Looks carefully for signs of abuse and neglect in HDR supervisory relationships	285 (26.2%)	Faculty/School pre-confirmation processes to flag potential issues that may impact a HDR candidate's academic journey	148 (23.8%)
Respects my privacy and confidentiality.	237 (21.8%)	Clear guidance for supervisors in terms of university expectations	148 (23.8%)
Escalates, investigates and acts on complaints	234 (21.5%)	An independent body, or section within the university, where HDR candidates can raise issues and concerns	147 (23.6%)

Provides reliable and continuous point of contact when reports or complaints are made	206 (18.9%)	Has a transparent process making it clear what happens when a report or complaint is made	128 (20.6%)
Arranges access to relevant student and support services	185 (17.0%)	Understands why supervisors can be vulnerable in HDR supervisory relationships	105 (16.9%)
Puts me first when responding to a report or complaint	155 (14.2%)	Escalates, investigates and acts on complaints	83 (13.3%)
-	-	Looks carefully for signs of abuse and neglect in HDR supervisory relationships	64 (10.3%)

4.3.4 Candidates/Supervisors sharing same cultural and/or language backgrounds

In examining further factors that can shape the supervisory relationship, which in turn affect the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the overall supervision experience, the cultural and language backgrounds of Candidates and Supervisors were considered. More specifically, the issue of whether Candidates and Supervisors sharing the same cultural and/or language backgrounds were perceived to a helpful factor in the supervisory relationship.

As shown in Figure 2, over half (627, 51.9%) of all Candidates indicated that they share the same cultural background with at least one of their Supervisors. About one in six (100, 15.9%) were International Candidates. Of the 527 domestic Candidates, not all identified their cultural background as including Australian. Over a quarter of domestic Candidates (143, 27.1%) did not include Australian when describing their cultural background.

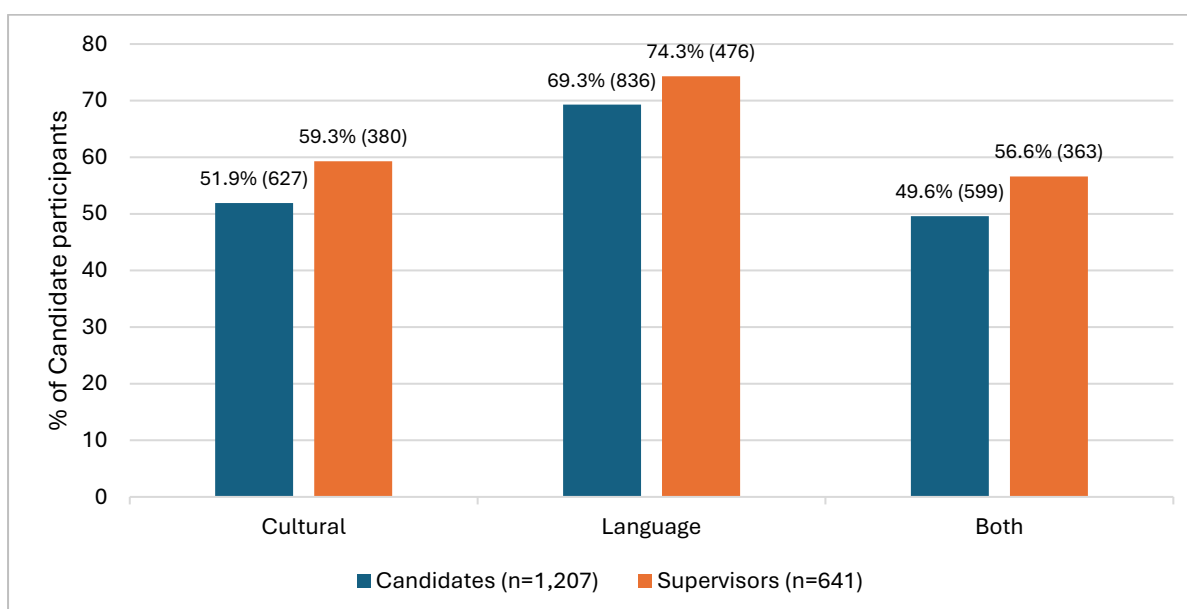


Figure 2. Candidates/Supervisors sharing same cultural and/or language backgrounds

For the 836 (69.3%) Candidates who indicated that they share the same first language with at least one of their Supervisors, about one in six (126, 15.1%) were International

Candidates, with half of these Candidates (65, 51.6%) indicating that their first language is a language other than English. Of the 710 domestic Candidates, 12 (1.7%) indicated their first language is a language other than English.

For Supervisors, about six in 10 (380, 59.3%) indicated that they share the same cultural background with at least one of their current Candidates. Of these, six in 10 (239, 62.9%) described their cultural background as including Australian. Three-quarters of Supervisors (476, 74.3%) indicated that they share the same first language with at least one of their current Candidates, and most indicated that their first language is English (448, 94.1%).

About half (599, 49.6%) of Candidates, and over half (363, 56.6%) of Supervisors, indicated that they share the same cultural and language backgrounds with at least one of their Candidates/Supervisors. Of the 599 Candidates, about one in eight of them (82, 13.7%) were international Candidates.

Helpfulness in sharing same cultural and/or language backgrounds

About three-quarters of all survey participants (Candidates – 864, 71.6%, Supervisors – 493, 76.9%) offered their views about whether sharing the same cultural background and/or being able to speak the same first language with their Supervisors or Candidates is helpful to them in the supervisory relationship.

Whilst more than two-thirds of Candidates (593, 68.6%) and over half of Supervisors (288, 58.4%) indicated that it is helpful, about a quarter of Candidates (202, 23.4%) and Supervisors (110, 22.3%) were unsure (Figure 3). Although only less than one in 10 Candidates (69, 8.0%) indicated that it is not helpful, about one in five Supervisors (95, 19.3%) indicated that it is not helpful.

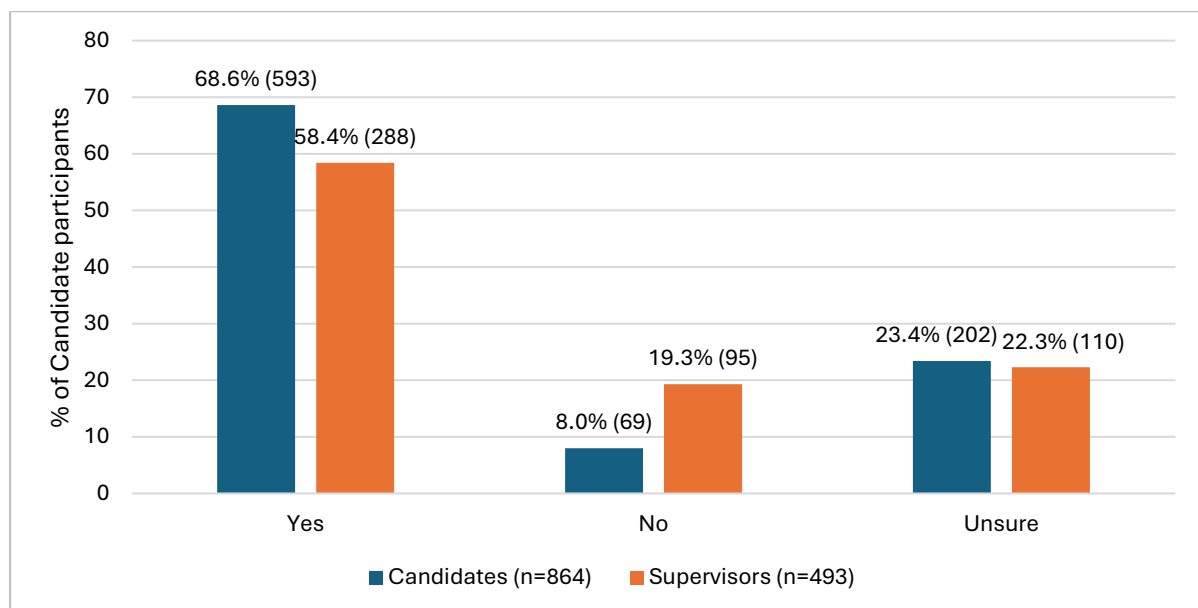


Figure 3. Helpfulness of sharing the same cultural and/or language backgrounds (Candidates and Supervisors)

Both Candidates and Supervisors were provided with a list of possible reasons as to how sharing the same cultural and/or language backgrounds can be potentially helpful in supervisory relationships. Multiple reasons could be selected by participants. The five most common reasons selected by Candidates and Supervisors were that it helped with:

- the overall supervision experience (Candidates – 426, 71.8%, Supervisors – 201, 69.8%)
- developing rapport (Candidates – 393, 66.3%, Supervisors – 192, 66.7%)
- discussion about work (Candidates – 423, 71.3%, Supervisors – 215, 74.7%)
- discussion about challenges and difficulties (Candidates – 395, 66.6%, Supervisors – 227, 78.8%)
- discussion about personal needs (Candidates – 305, 51.4%, Supervisors – 181, 28.2%).

Of the five common reasons, there was a symmetry in responses from Candidates and Supervisors except for two. Although, more Supervisors than Candidates in the study indicated that sharing the same cultural and/or languages backgrounds could help with discussion about challenges and difficulties in supervision (78.8% vs 66.6%), notably more Candidates than Supervisors indicated that it could help with discussion about personal needs (51.4% vs 28.2%).

Similarly, both Candidates and Supervisors were offered the opportunity to indicate perceived challenges due to difference in cultural and/or language backgrounds. Whilst three-quarters of Candidates (901, 74.6%) indicated that they had experienced no challenges, only about half the Supervisors (315, 49.1%) indicated the same. This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Just as both cohorts indicated that sharing the same cultural and/or language backgrounds helped with discussion about the work, they both indicated that the most common issue in not sharing the same backgrounds was that language barriers made discussions challenging. Moreover, Supervisors also indicated that difference in backgrounds can affect the supervision relationship as Candidates were perceived by them as having a different understanding of what a supervision relationship is. For some Candidates, their perceptions of Supervisors showing a lack of understanding of their cultural needs or obligations affected their HDR candidature.

Participants from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Background

Of the 14 Candidates (1.2%) who identified as of Australian Aboriginal (n=13), or Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (n=1), origin or descent, just over a quarter (n=4) identified as solely Indigenous Australian. Of the six Supervisors (0.9%) who identified as of Australian Aboriginal (n=5), or Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (n=1), origin or descent, half (n=3) identified as solely Indigenous Australian.

Focusing on the four Candidates and three Supervisors who solely identified as Indigenous Australian, three of the Candidates shared the same cultural background and/or spoke the same first language as at least one of their Supervisors. Two Supervisors shared the same cultural background and/or spoke the same first language as at least one of their Candidates.

Only one of the four Candidates, and one of the three Supervisors, indicated that it is helpful to share the same cultural background and/or be able to speak the same first language between Candidates and Supervisors. Whilst the other three Candidates indicated that it would not be helpful, the other two Supervisors indicated they were unsure.

For the Candidate and Supervisor who agreed the sharing the same cultural background and/or speaking the same first language is helpful, they both indicated the following as how it can be helpful – 1) Helps with developing rapport, 2) Helps with discussion about my work, 3) Helps with discussion about my personal needs, 4) Helps with discussion about challenges and difficulties, and 5) Helps with the overall supervision experience.

Whilst none of the three Supervisors who solely identified as Indigenous Australian did not indicate they experienced any challenges with their Candidates because of difference in their cultural or language backgrounds, this was not the case for the four Candidates. One Candidate indicated that 1) My supervisor(s) showed a lack of understanding of my cultural needs or obligations that affected my higher degree research, 2) My supervisor(s) held views about my cultural or language background that affected the supervisory relationship, 3) Repeated comments from my supervisor(s) about my cultural or language background affected my trust in the supervisory relationship. Another Candidate noted that a person with the same cultural background was allocated to their supervisory panel, which the Candidate did not request and found the forced arrangement unproductive.

4.4 Candidate experiences of challenging behaviours in the supervisory relationship

Both Candidates and Supervisors who participated in the online surveys provided information about challenging behaviours they experienced in their supervisory relationships. The types of behaviours explored were those pertaining to:

- Supervisor behaviours that made Candidates feel ignored, overlooked or uncared for
- Candidate behaviours affecting supervision practice
- Supervisor/Candidate behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries
- Supervisor/Candidate behaviours that made them feel unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against.

In the following sections, analyses are presented to show the prevalence of the noted types of behaviours experienced by the survey participants, the specific behaviours from the different behaviour types that they had experienced, the behaviours that had the most impact on them, support-seeking behaviours of those who had experienced any challenging behaviours, and their reporting behaviours.

4.4.1 Supervisor behaviours that made Candidates feel ignored, overlooked or uncared for

Over half of the Candidates (675, 55.9%) indicated that they had experienced at least one of the behaviours listed in the survey (Figure 4). Of the 675 Candidates who experienced one of

the list behaviours, 196 were international Candidates representing 49.7% of all international Candidates in the study.

Similarly, over half of the respondents (720, 59.7%) were aware of other HDR candidates from their university who had experienced the behaviours (Figure 5).

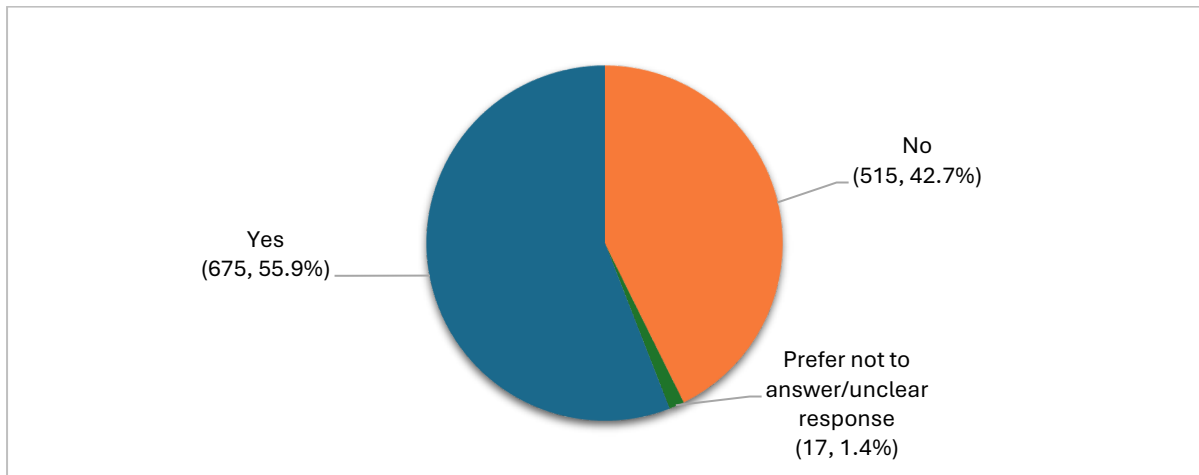


Figure 4. Candidates experiencing any of the 'ignored, overlooked or uncared for' behaviours

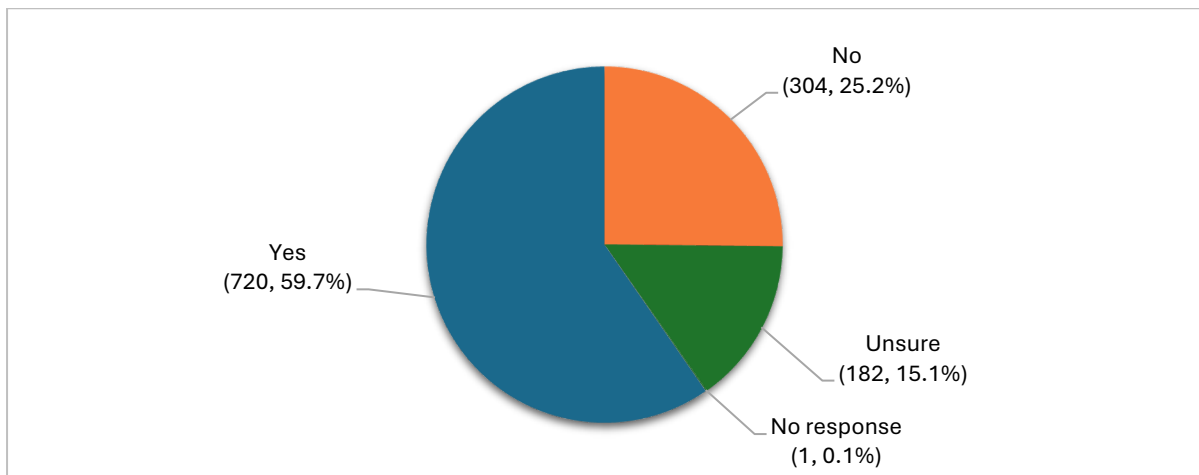


Figure 5. Awareness of other Candidates experiencing 'ignored, overlooked, or uncared for' behaviours

Table 13 shows the specific types of 'ignored, overlooked or uncared for' behaviours experienced by Candidates. The most common experiences reported by Candidates who experience these types of behaviours were their Supervisor not providing timely and constructive feedback on their work or progress (345, 28.6%), not clearly communicating expectations (312, 25.8%), and the Supervisor ignoring the Candidate's attempts to communicate with them (280, 23.2%).

Table 13. Types of ‘ignored, overlooked, or uncared for’ behaviours experienced

Type of behaviour	n=1,207*
My supervisor did not provide me with timely and constructive feedback on my work or progress	345 (28.6%)
My supervisor did not clearly communicate expectations with me	312 (25.8%)
My supervisor ignored my attempts to communicate with them	280 (23.2%)
My supervisor was frequently unavailable for meetings/supervision	268 (22.2%)
My supervisor wasted time in meetings discussing issues not directly related to my higher degree research	233 (19.3%)
My supervisor communicated with me in a disparaging manner	219 (18.1%)
My supervisor was not supportive of my personal circumstances impacting on my higher degree research	186 (15.4%)
My supervisor discussed their colleagues or other HDR candidates in a disparaging manner	164 (13.6%)
My supervisor expected me to undertake work for them that was unrelated to my higher degree research	138 (11.4%)
Other types of behaviours**	117 (9.7%)

* Candidates were able to select more than one behaviour.

** Including Supervisors being inadequately engaged in their research, hindering the progress of their research, ignoring Candidates’ ideas, and making Candidates feel excluded or ostracised.

Candidate experiences of these behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories (Table 40 in Appendix D). Candidates were significantly more likely to experience any of the ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours if they:

- identified as a woman or female
- identified as LGBTQIA+
- were born in Australia or spoke English as a first language
- identified as having a disability or chronic illness.

Candidate experiences of these behaviours were also compared based on Candidate’s studies information (Table 41 in Appendix D). Candidates were significantly more likely to experience any of the behaviours if:

- they were a domestic Candidate
- were on program leave
- had completed three or more years of their higher degree research.

4.4.1.1 Most impactful behaviour that made Candidates feel ignored, overlooked or uncared for

Candidates who indicated that they had experienced any of the ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours were asked to select the specific behaviour that had the most impact on them. The most impactful behaviours selected were their Supervisor:

- not providing them with timely and constructive feedback on their work or progress (142, 21.0%)
- communicating with them in a disparaging manner (103, 15.3%)
- not clearly communicating expectations (84, 12.4%).

Candidates were asked a series of questions related to the most impactful behaviour that they had experienced, including questions about the supervisory roles responsible for the behaviour and frequency of the behaviour. The key findings were:

- Primary/Principal Supervisors were most frequently identified as responsible for the most impactful behaviours (339, 50.2%). It was also common for multiple or all supervisors to be responsible for the behaviour (117, 17.3%).
- About one in 10 (70, 10.4%) affected Candidates indicated that they 'always' experienced the behaviour, just under half (270, 40.0%) indicated 'often', and a third indicated 'sometimes' (228, 33.8%).

These findings were reflected in the qualitative data, when many Candidates discussed Supervisor behaviours that made them feel 'ignored, overlooked or uncared for'. Candidates frequently described their frustrations with the quality and timeliness of Supervisor feedback. For example:

The amount of times he has also sent me things past the deadline for the review paper ... I let him know a week in advance and then half an hour before a deadline I get a call ... with all these questions (Candidate Interview 23, male, PhD, international student).

Many Candidates also described scenarios when Supervisors did not clearly communicate their expectations or repeatedly changed their advice. For example:

I would say my supervisor is somebody who doesn't say and expects you to read their mind. And then get angry, upset at you because you didn't do what they never told you to do. It's like you will make a mistake without knowing that you did and then you will learn what their expectation is (Candidate Interview 18, female, PhD, international student).

Some Candidates reported Supervisors being "too hands off", absent for extended periods, regularly cancelling or rescheduling meetings (often with little notice), not responding to attempted communications, or otherwise being unavailable for supervision. One Candidate reported that their Supervisor "simply disappeared off campus for a couple of months" with "no communication." Another, who described their situation as "benign neglect", stated:

Trying to even get in contact with him was impossible... it didn't feel like there was any point emailing him because you'd get the 'out of office' reply ... I'd often send him stuff and I just wouldn't hear back (Candidate Interview 27, male, PhD, domestic student).

Several Candidates relayed how one of their Supervisors had retired, been made redundant, or otherwise departed the university, frequently without notice.

Many Candidates recognised broader structural issues underpinning supervisor availability. For example, one Candidate recognised that their supervisor was "incredibly overworked and overloaded" and "their mental health was obviously really crumbling as a result." Several Supervisors also spoke of the heavy supervisory load they were carrying and limited time they had available to dedicate to HDR supervision.

Candidates also reported their supervisors discussing issues not directly related to their research. One Candidate reported that their supervisors “are often distracted and/or talk about personal things instead of the research.” Another referred to their “primary supervisors' tendency to share aspects of her own life, including her stresses and problems, during [their] meetings.”

Several Candidates reported being spoken to in a disparaging manner by their Supervisors. For example, one Candidate noted in their survey that they were “spoken to in a patronising, derogatory way. Shreds were torn off and [was told they were] completely incompetent with [their] writing.”

Whilst some Candidates reported having supervisory relationships where they “can be open about personal difficulties” and feel “comfortable in bringing up potential issues ... both in my work and outside of it”, several survey participants reported instances of their Supervisors not being supportive of personal circumstances, including family and work responsibilities and pressuring them to work on weekends.

4.4.2 Supervisor behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries

As shown in Figure 6, about one in seven Candidates (186, 15.4%) indicated that they had experienced at least one of the behaviours from their Supervisors that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries. A similar percentage of the total number of international Candidates (61, 15.5%) experienced this type of behaviours from their Supervisors when compared with domestic Candidates (125, 15.4%).

A higher proportion of Candidates (356, 29.5%) stated that they were aware of other Candidates from their university who had experienced the behaviours (Figure 7).

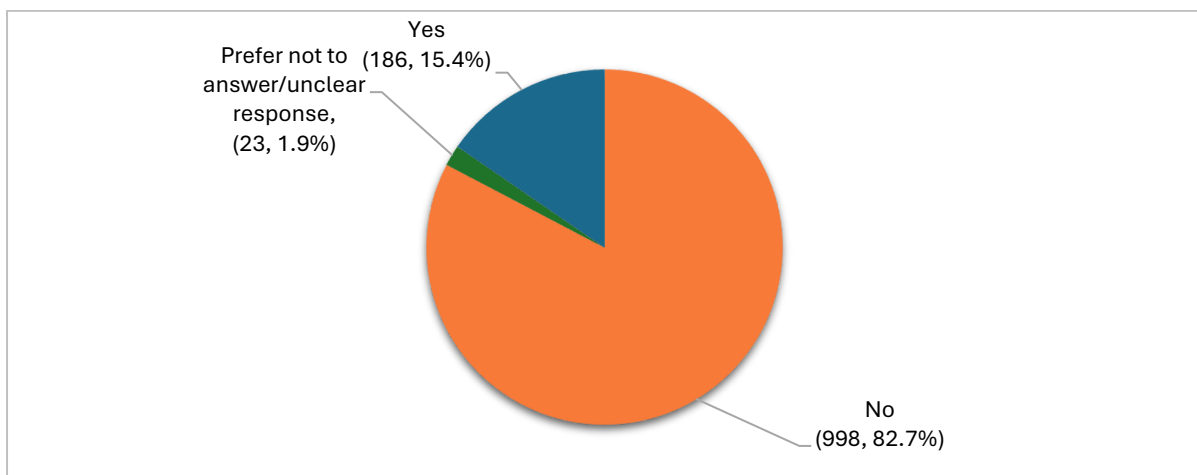


Figure 6. Candidates experiencing any of the ‘unprofessional or crossed professional boundary’ behaviours

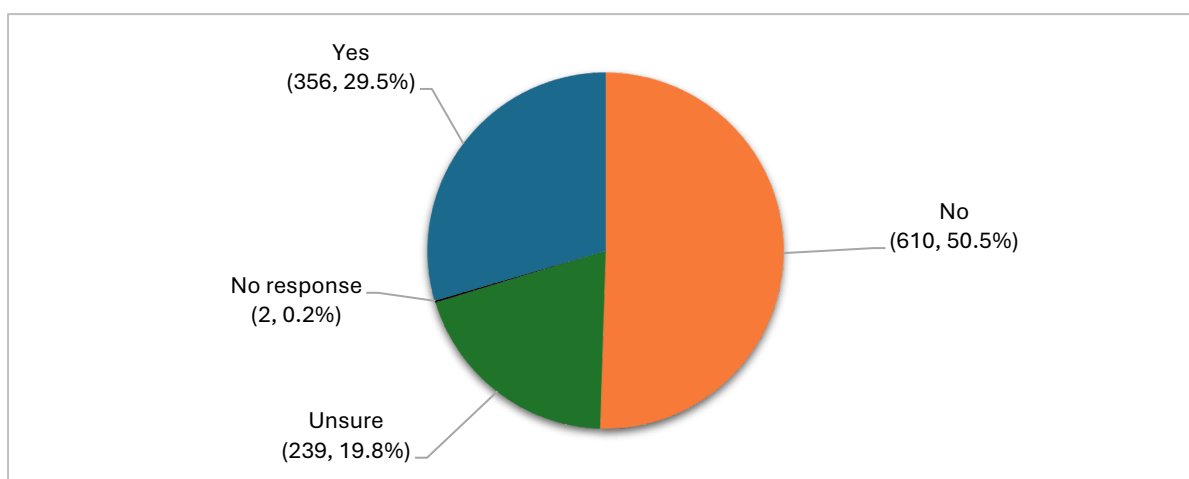


Figure 7. Awareness of other Candidates experiencing 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundary' behaviours

Table 14 illustrates the types of 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours experienced by Candidates. The most common types of 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours experienced by Candidates were Supervisors making inappropriate enquiries or comments about the Candidate's personal life (65, 5.4%), not appropriately acknowledging the Candidate's work (45, 3.7%) and appropriating the Candidate's research as their own (36, 3.0%).

Table 14. Types of 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundary' behaviours experienced

Type of behaviour	n=1,207*
My supervisor made inappropriate enquiries or comments about my personal life	65 (5.4%)
My supervisor did not appropriately acknowledge my work	45 (3.7%)
My supervisor appropriated my research as their own	36 (3.0%)
My supervisor invited me to social events that were not relevant to my research/career	32 (2.7%)
My supervisor did not appropriately disclose or deal with a conflict of interest relating to my research	31 (2.6%)
My supervisor inappropriately claimed authorship or co-authorship of my work	29 (2.4%)
My supervisor made inappropriate and unwanted contact with me online	15 (1.2%)
My supervisor attempted to engage in an unwanted friendship with me	11 (0.9%)
Other types of behaviours**	75 (6.2%)
My supervisor attempted to engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with me	-

* Candidates were able to select more than one behaviour.

** Including their Supervisor misrepresenting their research, skills or qualifications and their Supervisor requiring them to do things that the Candidate did not agree with.

Candidate experiences of these behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories (Table 42 in Appendix D). The proportion of participants who experienced any type of behaviour significantly differed according to their age. Compared to Candidates aged 29 and under, those aged between 30 and 39 were significantly more likely to experience unprofessional behaviours from their supervisors.

Candidate experiences of these behaviours were also compared based on their studies information (Table 43 in Appendix D). Candidates who had completed three or more years of their research were significantly more likely to experience unprofessional behaviours from their supervisors compared to Candidates who had only completed one or two years.

4.4.2.1 Most impactful behaviour that was unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries

Candidates who indicated that they had experienced any of the 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours were asked to select the specific behaviour that had the most impact on them. The most impactful behaviours selected were their Supervisor:

- making inappropriate enquiries or comments about their personal life (31, 16.7%)
- not appropriately acknowledging their work (20, 10.8%)
- inappropriately claiming authorship or co-authorship of their work (18, 9.7%).

Candidates were asked a series of questions related to the most impactful behaviour that they had experienced. The key findings were:

- Primary/Principal Supervisors were most frequently identified as responsible for the most impactful behaviours (93, 50.0%), followed by Secondary/Associate Supervisors (31, 16.7%). A considerable number of Candidates (23, 12.4%) chose not to provide a response to this question.
- Over a third of the respondents stated that the behaviour happened either 'always' (15, 8.1%) or 'often' (53, 28.5%), and a third stated that the behaviour happened 'sometimes' (63, 33.9%).

Candidates reported far fewer experiences of 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' Supervisor behaviours in the survey when compared with 'ignored, overlooked or uncared for' behaviours. Nevertheless, some 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' issues were raised by Candidates in their interviews. Several Candidates reported that their Supervisor encroached on their personal time, for example, by calling the Candidate on their personal phone number outside of standard work hours.

Several Candidates reflected on Supervisors failing to recognise Candidates' contributions to work outside their research, such as intellectual input into grant applications. For example:

Betrayed trust, exploitation, plagiarized ideas. Obtaining salary for themselves for work I had already done. Soliciting grant ideas and drafts and then not crediting me as an author, investigator or passing the work onto me (Candidate survey response).

Similarly, some Candidates described scenarios where their Supervisor appropriated their research as their own, or inappropriately claimed authorship or co-authorship of their work, most particularly in relation to journal articles.

Several Candidates highlighted circumstances where their Supervisor did not appropriately disclose or deal with a conflict of interest relating to their research, including where a Supervisor had a partner/spouse also involved in their research project. For example:

I didn't feel that anyone else in my uni would be able to help me with my thesis because of the horrible nature of the two supervisors. I knew if I raised an issue about the one which has been the worse, her wife will go into defence mode, and I would lose both of them (Candidate survey response).

4.4.3 Behaviours that made Candidates feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against ('unsafe behaviours')

Figure 8 shows that more than one in five Candidates (263, 21.8%) indicated that they had experienced at least one of the 'unsafe behaviours' listed in the survey. A similar percentage of the total number of international Candidates (81, 20.6%) experienced these types of behaviours from their Supervisors when compared with domestic Candidates (182, 22.4%).

A quarter of Candidates (314, 26.0%) reported that they were aware of other Candidates at their university who had experienced the behaviours (Figure 9).

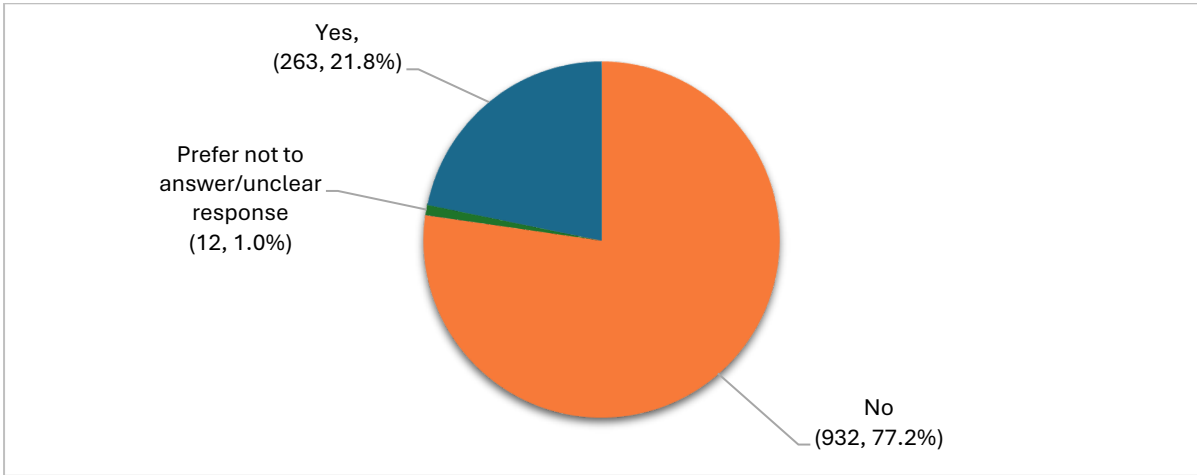


Figure 8. Candidates experiencing any of the 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' behaviours

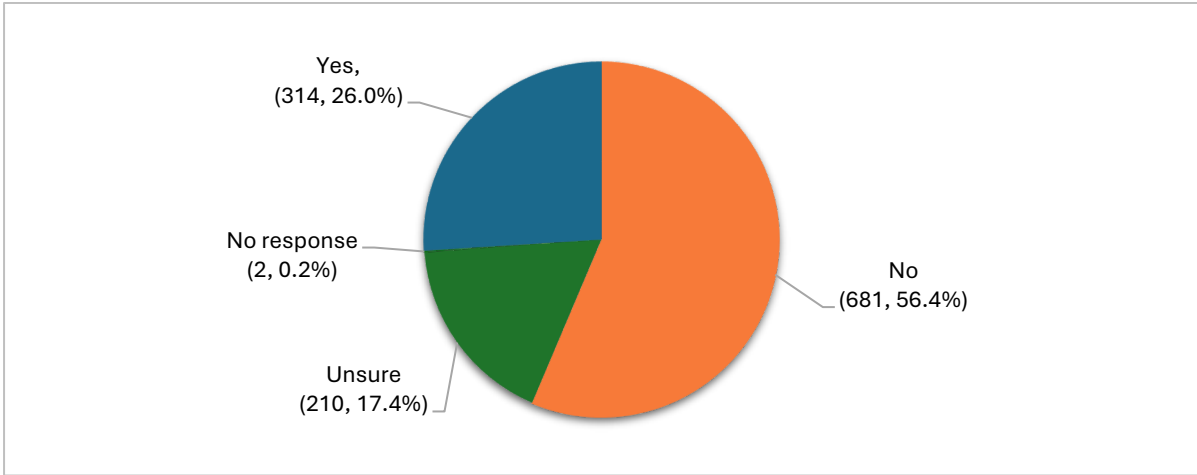


Figure 9. Awareness of other Candidates experiencing 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' behaviours

As shown in Table 15, for Candidates who experienced ‘unsafe behaviours’ from their Supervisors, the most common types of behaviours were Supervisors:

- making Candidates feel belittled or humiliated (192, 15.9%)
- being aggressive or intimidating in their comments or conduct (123, 10.2%).

Table 15. Types of ‘unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against’ behaviours experienced

Type of behaviour	n=1,207*
My supervisor made me feel belittled or humiliated	192 (15.9%)
My supervisor was aggressive or intimidating in their comments or conduct	123 (10.2%)
My supervisor treated me less favourably because of my personal characteristics	47 (3.9%)
My supervisor convened with others in a way that made me feel intimidated	77 (6.4%)
My supervisor used abusive, insulting or offensive language	65 (5.4%)
My supervisor was physically violent towards me or made threats of physical violence	3 (0.2%)
My supervisor sexually harassed me	2 (0.2%)
Other types of behaviours**	39 (3.2%)
My supervisor attempted to or had sex with me without my consent	-

* Candidates were able to select more than one behaviour.

** Including Supervisors speaking about Candidates to other colleagues behind their back and Supervisors making negative comments about the Candidate’s research.

Candidate experiences of these behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories (Table 44 in Appendix D). Candidates were significantly more likely to experience any type of the behaviours if they:

- identified as women/female or non-binary/a different identity
- identified as having a disability or chronic illness.

Candidate experiences of these behaviours were also compared based on their studies information (Table 45 in Appendix D). Candidates who were on program leave were significantly more likely to report having experienced any type of behaviour compared to Candidates who were enrolled full-time. Candidates were also more likely to have experienced these behaviours if they had completed three or more years of their higher degree research compared to Candidates who had only completed one to two years.

4.4.3.1 Most impactful behaviour

Candidates who indicated that they had experienced ‘unsafe behaviours’ were then asked to select which behaviour had the most impact on them. The most impactful behaviours selected were their Supervisor:

- making them feel belittled or humiliated (131, 49.8%)
- being aggressive or intimidating in their comments or conduct (49, 18.6%).

Candidates were asked a series of questions related to the most impactful behaviour that they had experienced. The key findings were:

- Primary/Principal Supervisors were most frequently identified as responsible for the most impactful behaviours (119, 45.2%), followed by Secondary/Associate Supervisors (58, 22.1%).

- Four in 10 Candidates reported that the behaviour happened either ‘always’ (16, 6.1%) or ‘often’ (89, 33.8%), with another third reporting that the behaviour happened ‘sometimes’ (89, 33.8%).

These experiences were reflected in the interviews. A Candidate who disclosed they had dyslexia reported “belittling remarks about my poor spelling and grammar” from their secondary supervisor. Another relayed that “confiding in supervisors about severe past traumas turned into a joke.”

One Candidate interview participant reported their Supervisor “treating students with contempt” and using “intimidation tactics and divide and conquer” strategies to try to get Candidates to work on other projects. Another Candidate provided the following account.

The power dynamic, it was very much I would always be treated like I was undermining him by not doing something he said or not finding a solution fast enough ... One time he was ... just raising his voice, pretty much yelling, just accusing me of undermining him, saying, “We didn’t agree to that. We didn’t agree to this. You didn’t tell me that.” Accusing me of ... trying to bamboozle my PhD reviewers (Candidate Interview 13, male, PhD, domestic student).

Some Candidates reported being treated differently due to their gender. One survey participant reported “comments made in my progress reports were inappropriate and verging on legally discriminatory”, which they attributed to “being female and requiring time off for serious medical procedures.” A male Candidate, who described their Supervisor as “very aggressive”, observed that “other students that were women or from other ethnic groups, they would cop it in a different way where he’d be very dismissive or very rude.”

Some participants provided accounts of ‘unsafe behaviours’ targeting minority groups. In an individual interview, a lab-based Candidate reported experiencing “a huge discrimination and bias regarding many things,” including higher and different expectations based on their nationality, which led to conflicts, anxiety and depression. Some Candidates stated in their surveys that they experienced “questionable statements about LGBT community from all supervisors”, “direct harassment regarding disability”, or disability being raised “in [a] negative context”. One Candidate reported in their interview that they avoided their Supervisor after “he started becoming extremely aggressive on a physical front.”

4.5 Supervisor experiences of challenging behaviours in the supervisory relationship

Like Candidates, Supervisors reported experiencing challenging behaviours in their supervisory relationships that not only affected supervision practices, but also behaviours they perceived to be unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries, and even behaviours that made them feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against.

4.5.1 Behaviours affecting supervision practice

Over half of the Supervisors (371, 57.9%) indicated that they had experienced Candidates’ behaviours that affected their supervision practice (Figure 10). In comparison, more

Supervisors (446, 69.6%) indicated that they were aware of other Supervisors from their university who had experienced these behaviours (Figure 11).

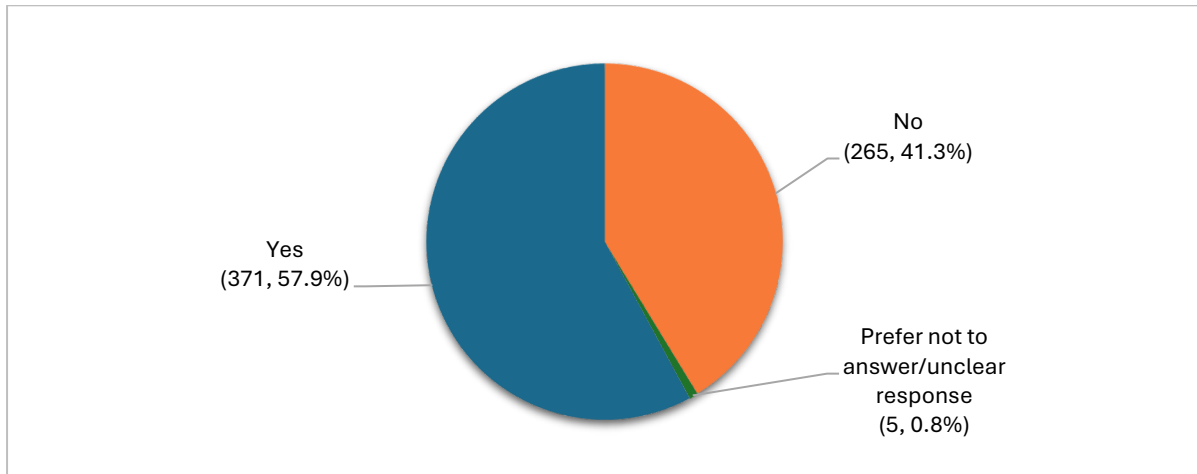


Figure 10. Supervisors experiencing any of the 'behaviours affecting supervision practice'

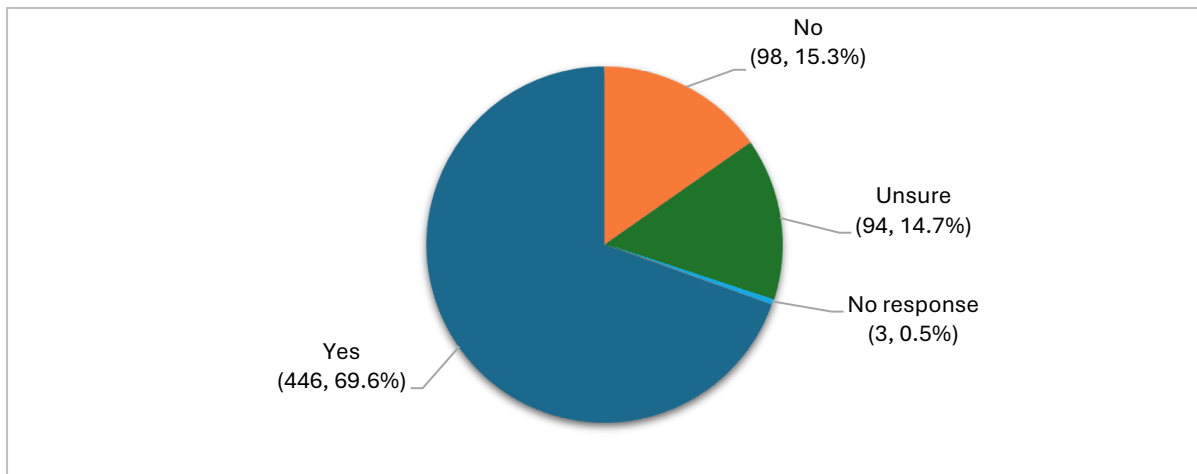


Figure 11. Awareness of other Supervisors experiencing 'behaviours affecting supervision practice'

From a supplied list of behaviours (Table 16), Supervisors indicated that the most common types of 'behaviours affecting supervision practice' experienced by Supervisors were Candidates:

- not clearly communicating about the progress of their research (229, 35.7%)
- rebuffing or ignoring academic feedback (209, 32.6%)
- having unrealistic expectations around the Supervisor's capacity to provide feedback on their research (184, 28.7%).

Table 16. Types of 'behaviours affecting supervision practice' experienced

Type of behaviour	n=641*
A HDR candidate did not clearly communicate with me about the progress of their research	229 (35.7%)
A HDR candidate rebuffed or ignored my academic feedback	209 (32.6%)
A HDR candidate had unrealistic expectations around my capacity to provide feedback on their research	184 (28.7%)

A HDR candidate misrepresented their research background or capacity to undertake HDR level research	113 (17.6%)
A HDR candidate has formally complained about an aspect of their HDR supervision	31 (4.8%)
A HDR candidate sought to have me removed as their HDR supervisor	22 (3.4%)
A HDR candidate has appropriated my work in their research	19 (3.0%)
A HDR candidate did not appropriately disclose or deal with a conflict of interest	8 (1.2%)
Other types of behaviours**	49 (7.6%)

* Supervisors were able to select more than one behaviour.

** Including Candidates not being adequately engaged in their research, Candidates engaging in academic misconduct, and Candidates being dishonest about their work or progress.

Supervisor experiences of these behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories (Table 46 in Appendix E). Supervisors who experienced any type of 'behaviours affecting supervision practice' significantly differed according to their age. Supervisors aged between 40 and 49 years old were significantly more likely to have experienced any of the behaviours compared to Supervisors aged 39 and under.

Supervisor experiences of these behaviours were also compared based on their employment information (Table 47 in Appendix E). Supervisors were significantly more likely to experience any type of 'behaviours affecting supervision practice' if they were:

- employed on a permanent basis
- currently supervising three or more Candidates (as compared to Supervisors who were supervising one or two Candidates).

4.5.1.1 Most impactful behaviour

Supervisors indicated the most common types of behaviours that affected their supervision practice were also behaviours that had the most impact on them. That is, Candidates:

- not clearly communicating about the progress of their research (107, 28.8%)
- rebuffing or ignoring academic feedback (87, 23.5%)
- having unrealistic expectations around the Supervisor's capacity to provide feedback on their research (70, 18.9%).

Supervisors also indicated the frequency of occurrence of these behaviours. Whilst a quarter (96, 25.9%) said that these behaviours happened 'rarely', one in five Supervisors (78, 21.0%) indicated that they happened either 'always' (11, 3.0%) or 'often' (67, 18.1%) with just over a third (134, 36.1%) indicated that they happened 'sometimes'.

These experiences were reflected in interviews where some Supervisors commented on their Candidates not clearly communicating about the progress of their research, particularly in the lead up to confirmation processes. For example:

it's almost like bluffing or like a smokescreen. And it seems that it's where they are embarrassed or ashamed of not progressing quickly. So, they put on a smokescreen ... Trying to seem like they understand things or, 'Yes, things are going fine.' (Supervisor Interview 29, male).

Supervisors also reported Candidates rebuffing or ignoring their feedback, either where Candidates did not understand what was required, or “from students who kind of had their own idea of what they’re doing and weren’t open perhaps to the advice that it wasn’t going to work.”

As noted previously, Candidates reported that their Supervisors had not provided timely and constructive feedback on their work or progress. During interviews, Supervisors also raised mismatched expectations between Candidates and Supervisors in relation to the timeliness and depth of feedback. One Supervisor relayed concerns “around students expecting you to just always be there for them, almost like they think that that is the main part of your job.” Several Supervisors had experienced Candidates who submitted work and expected feedback “in 24 to 48 hours”.

In exploring unrealistic expectation issues raised, Supervisors’ accounts in their interview about Candidates misrepresenting their research background or capacity to undertake HDR level research that might offer some clarity. Some Supervisors raised concerns about the expected standard of work for a graduate research program not being appreciated by their Candidates. One Supervisor suggested that some Candidates were not “at the standard necessary” and that “might be from misunderstanding [about] what’s required”, and another contended that there had been a “real mismatch” around expectations of quality of work.

4.5.2 Candidate behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries

Only a small number of Supervisors (59, 9.2%) indicated that they had experienced unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries behaviours from their Candidates (Figure 12). However, almost a quarter of Supervisors (146, 22.8%) indicated that they were aware of other Supervisors from their university who had experienced these behaviours (Figure 13).

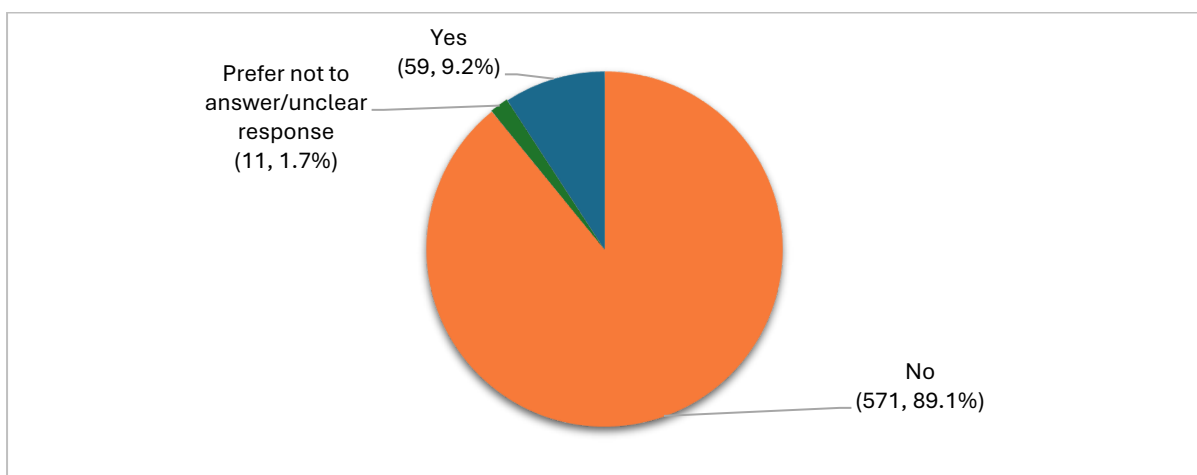


Figure 12. Supervisors experiencing any of the ‘unprofessional or cross professional boundaries’ behaviours

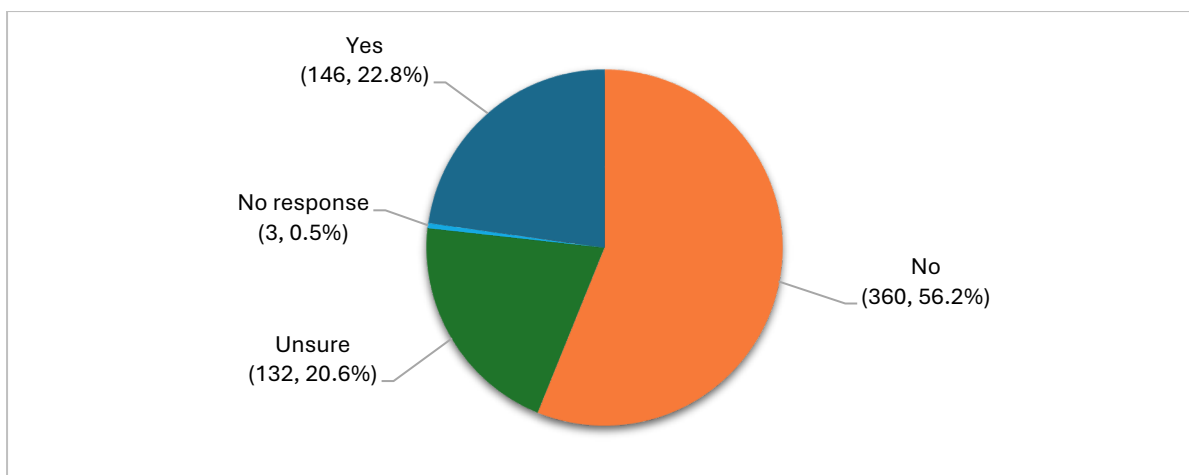


Figure 13. Awareness of other Supervisors experiencing 'unprofessional or cross professional boundaries' behaviours

From a supplied list of 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours (Table 17), Supervisors indicated that they most likely experienced behaviours that were not listed such as Candidates giving them unwanted gifts and sharing unwanted personal information with them (26, 4.1%), and Candidates inviting them to social events not relevant to their research (24, 3.7%). However, it should be noted that these behaviours were overall uncommon among the Supervisors responding to the survey.

Table 17. Types of 'unprofessional or cross professional boundaries' behaviours experienced

Type of behaviour	n=641*
A HDR candidate invited me to social events that were not relevant to their research	24 (3.7%)
A HDR candidate made inappropriate inquiries about my personal life	12 (1.9%)
A HDR candidate attempted to engage in an unwanted friendship with me	12 (1.9%)
A HDR candidate made inappropriate and unwanted contact with me online	12 (1.9%)
A HDR candidate attempted to engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with me	4 (0.6%)
Other types of behaviours**	26 (4.1%)

* Supervisors were able to select more than one behaviour.

** Including Candidates giving their Supervisors unwanted gifts and Candidates sharing unwanted personal information with their Supervisor.

Supervisor experiences of these behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories and Supervisor's employment information (Tables 48 and 49 in Appendix E). No significant differences were identified possibly due to the small number of Supervisors who experienced these types of behaviours.

4.5.2.1 Most impactful behaviour

Supervisors who indicated they had experienced any of the 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours were asked to select which behaviour had the biggest impact on them. The most commonly selected behaviours were:

- 'Other' types of behaviours not specified in the survey such as Candidates giving Supervisors unwanted gifts and sharing unwanted personal information (21, 35.6%)

- Candidates inviting their supervisor to social events that were not relevant to their research (8, 13.6%)
- Candidates making inappropriate inquiries about their Supervisor’s personal life (7, 11.9%).

In terms of frequency of occurrence, four in 10 Supervisors (24, 40.7%) reported that these behaviours happened ‘sometimes’, and almost a quarter (14, 23.7%) reported that they happened ‘very rarely’.

‘Unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries’ behaviours were rarely raised by Supervisors during interviews. Several Supervisors acknowledged that their relationships with Candidates sometimes deepen into friendship over the course of the Candidature. One of the Supervisors, who spent time with their Candidate and their respective partners on weekends, acknowledged that “[they] can see that there is the potential for that to cause [them] issues into the future”.

4.5.3 Behaviours that made Supervisors feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against (‘unsafe behaviours’)

Only one in 12 Supervisors (54, 8.4%) reported experiencing any of the ‘unsafe behaviours’ (Figure 14). In contrast, close to one in five (120, 18.7%) Supervisors indicated that they were aware of other Supervisors from their university who had experienced ‘unsafe behaviours’ from their Candidates (Figure 15).

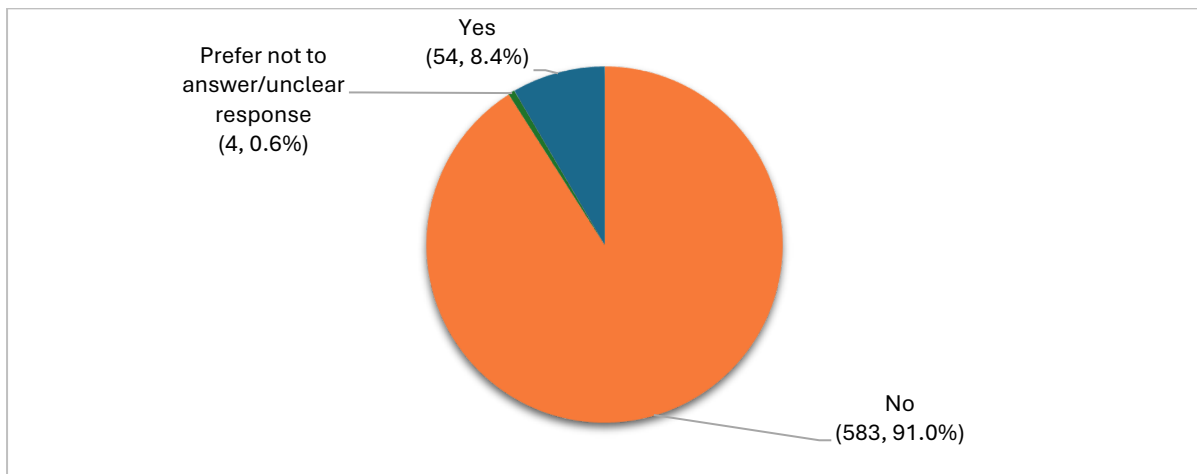


Figure 14. Supervisors experiencing any of the ‘unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against’ behaviours

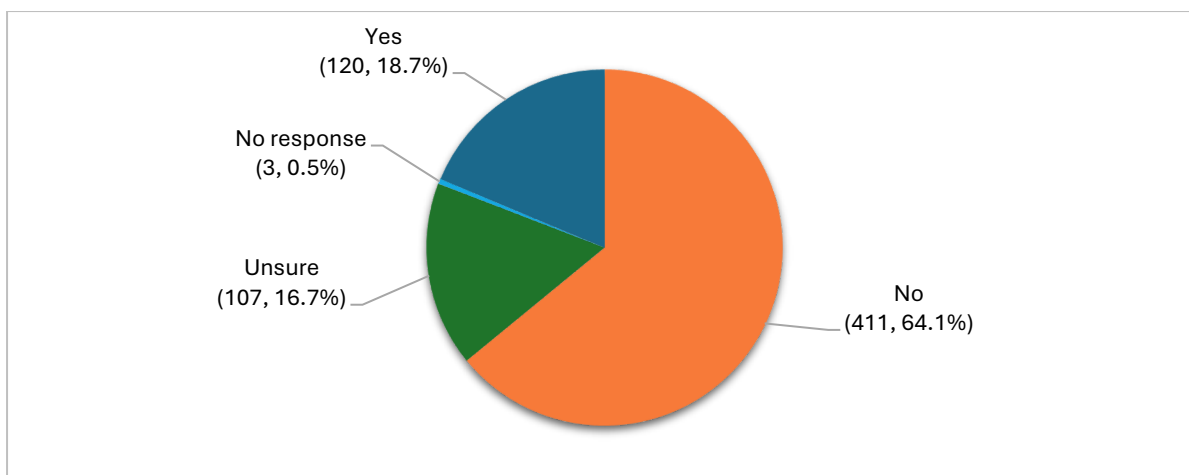


Figure 15. Awareness of other Supervisors experiencing 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' behaviours

The most common types of 'unsafe behaviours' experienced by the Supervisors were Candidates:

- being aggressive or intimidating in their comments or conduct (30, 4.7%)
- making them feel belittled or humiliated (25, 3.9%)
- Used abusive, insulting or threatening language (14, 2.2%).

However, these behaviours were overall uncommon among the Supervisors responding to the survey (Table 18).

Table 18. Types of 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' behaviours experienced

Type of behaviour	n=641*
A HDR candidate was aggressive or intimidating in their comments or conduct	30 (4.7%)
A HDR candidate made me feel belittled or humiliated	25 (3.9%)
A HDR candidate used abusive, insulting or threatening language	14 (2.2%)
A HDR candidate sexually harassed me	2 (0.3%)
Other types of behaviours	9 (1.4%)
A HDR candidate was physically violent or made threats of physical violence	-
A HDR attempted to have sex with me without my consent	-
A HDR candidate had sex with me without my consent	-

* Supervisors were able to select more than one behaviour.

Supervisor experiences of these behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories, and Supervisor's employment information (Tables 50 and 51 in Appendix E). No significant differences were identified possibly due to the small number of Supervisors who experienced these types of behaviours.

4.5.3.1 Most impactful behaviour

Supervisors who indicated they had experienced any of the ‘unsafe behaviours’ were asked to select which behaviour had the biggest impact on them. The most commonly selected behaviours were Candidates:

- being aggressive or intimidating in their comments or conduct (23, 42.6%)
- making their Supervisors feel belittled or humiliated (16, 29.6%).

In terms of frequency of occurrence, whilst a third of Supervisors (18, 33.3%) who experienced these behaviours reported that they happened ‘rarely’, one in five Supervisors (11, 20.4%) indicated that these behaviours happened either ‘always’ (1, 1.9%) or ‘often’ (10, 18.5%) with just over one- third of Supervisors (19, 35.2%) reported that it happened ‘sometimes’.

During interviews, a small number of Supervisors relayed experiences or observations of aggressive or intimidating Candidate behaviours as well as being subject to abusive, insulting or threatening language. A Supervisor with an “unbelievably argumentative” Candidate reported “it got to the stage that I literally felt nauseated at the thought of having a meeting with her.” Another stated that “It just became awful. Like I just hated having meetings with him because I was so stressed that he was just going to yell at me.” One Supervisor compared their relationship with their Candidate as “like being in an abusive relationship.”

4.6 Effects of challenging behaviours on Candidates and Supervisors

From two lists of supplied statements, one for Candidates and one for Supervisors, participants provided information about how the most impactful behaviour from each of the different types of challenging behaviours had affected them.

Some statements appeared on both lists with some appearing in slightly different phrasing to match the perspective of the participant. Some statements only appeared on the supplied list for Candidates and some only for Supervisors.

Table 19. Effects of challenging behaviours participants

Effects	Ignored, overlooked or uncared for	Behaviours affecting supervision practice	Unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries		Unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against	
	Cand. (n=675*)	Super. (n=371*)	Cand. (n=186*)	Super. (n=59*)	Cand. (n=263*)	Super. (n=54*)
It negatively impacted my relationship with my Supervisors / Candidates	371 (55.0%)	217 (58.5%)	129 (69.4%)	25 (42.4%)	213 (81.0%)	40 (74.1%)
It negatively affected my productivity	463 (68.6%)	130 (35.0%)	84 (45.2%)	10 (16.9%)	164 (62.4%)	20 (37.0%)
It negatively affected my mental or emotional wellbeing	427 (63.3%)	118 (31.8%)	114 (61.3%)	15 (25.4%)	211 (80.2%)	33 (61.1%)

It negatively impacted my self-esteem or confidence	366 (54.2%)	45 (12.1%)	88 (47.3%)	5 (8.5%)	197 (74.9%)	17 (31.5%)
I experienced discomfort or awkwardness in my academic environment	325 (48.1%)	69 (18.6%)	102 (54.8%)	19 (32.2%)	167 (63.5%)	21 (38.9%)
It negatively affected the progress of my HDR / my Candidate's research	442 (65.5%)	14 (3.8%)	81 (43.5%)	-	156 (59.3%)	-
It negatively affected my physical health and wellbeing	160 (23.7%)	38 (10.2%)	53 (28.5%)	7 (11.9%)	83 (31.6%)	13 (24.1%)
It negatively affected my relationship with other people	139 (20.6%)	33 (8.9%)	46 (24.7%)	7 (11.9%)	75 (28.5%)	9 (16.7%)
I had to take time off from my research/work	107 (15.9%)	9 (2.4%)	29 (15.6%)	6 (10.2%)	62 (23.6%)	3 (5.6%)
It negatively affected my career or job prospects	99 (14.7%)	22 (5.9%)	44 (23.7%)	6 (10.2%)	55 (20.9%)	5 (9.3%)
I felt that I couldn't trust my supervisor or the university [Candidates ONLY]	7 (1.0%)	N/A	3 (1.6%)	N/A	-	N/A
I considered quitting my higher degree research [Candidates ONLY]	3 (0.4%)	N/A	1 (0.5%)	N/A	2 (0.8%)	N/A
It negatively affected my desire to supervise HDR candidates in the future [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	3 (0.8%)	N/A	-	N/A	-
It only had a minor impact	3 (0.4%)	20 (5.4%)	2 (1.1%)	1 (1.7%)	-	-
It did not affect me	13 (1.9%)	30 (8.1%)	8 (4.3%)	21 (35.6%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)

* Participants were able to select more than one effect.

Table 19 shows how the challenging behaviour type affected Candidates and Supervisors differently. Depending on the type of challenging behaviour, some negative effects were more likely to be reported by participants than others. However, the negative effects commonly reported by the participants were:

- 'It negatively impacted my relationship with my Supervisors/Candidates' – Candidates (55.0%-81.0%), Supervisors (42.4%-74.1%)
- 'It negatively affected my productivity' – Candidates (45.2%-68.6%), Supervisors (16.9%-37.0%)
- 'It negatively affected my emotional or emotional wellbeing' – Candidates (61.3%-80.2%), Supervisors (25.4%-61.1%)
- 'It negatively affected my self-esteem or confidence' – Candidates (47.3%-74.9%), Supervisors (8.5%-31.5%)
- 'I experienced discomfort or awkwardness in my academic environment' – Candidates (48.1%-63.5%), Supervisors (18.6%-38.9%)

The following notable findings were identified:

- The 'It negatively affected the progress of my HDR / my Candidate's research' statement was most endorsed by Candidates than Supervisors. Whilst Candidates selected this negative effect across the different types of challenging behaviours (43.5%-65.5%), Supervisors only selected this effect when experiencing behaviours affecting supervision practice and in a small number (3.8%).
- More than a third of Supervisors (21, 35.6%) who experienced 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours reported that these behaviours did not affect them.

4.7 Management of challenging behaviours

Analyses of survey data and interview accounts indicated that both Candidates and Supervisors experienced a range of challenging behaviours in supervision. For some Candidates and Supervisors, these behaviours have negatively affected them personally and professionally.

In endeavouring to gain a deeper understanding on how institutions respond to and manage these challenging behaviours from the perspective of Candidates and Supervisors in this study, information was collected from them pertaining to the support available to them at their university, and the reporting or complaint process through which their experiences can be formally addressed.

4.7.1 Knowledge and perceptions of university policies, procedures and support pathways

As shown in Table 20, over three-quarters of survey participants (1,426, 77.2%) indicated they had 'some' knowledge about their university's policies and procedures for addressing unacceptable behaviours. However, Supervisors knowledge about their university's policies and procedures was considerably higher (592, 92.4%) than for Candidates (834, 69.1%), with almost a third of Candidates indicating that they knew 'very little' or 'nothing' of these policies (371, 30.7%).

Eight in 10 Candidates (957, 79.3%) and nine in 10 Supervisors (580, 90.5%) had at least 'some' knowledge of where they can seek support or assistance within their university about supervisory relationship issues. However, more than one in five Candidates reported knowing 'very little' or 'nothing' of these support and assistance pathways.

Table 20. Knowledge of policies, procedures, support and assistance (Candidates and Supervisors)

Level of knowledge	Candidates (n=1,207)		Supervisors (n=641)	
	Knowledge of procedures/policies on unacceptable behaviours	Knowledge of university support/assistance on unacceptable behaviours	Knowledge of procedures/policies	Knowledge of university support/assistance
Nothing	68 (5.6%)	37 (3.1%)	2 (0.3%)	5 (0.8%)
Very little	303 (25.1%)	212 (17.6%)	47 (7.3%)	56 (8.7%)

Some	563 (46.6%)	600 (49.7%)	274 (42.7%)	273 (42.6%)
A lot	238 (19.7%)	320 (26.5%)	284 (44.3%)	280 (43.7%)
Everything	33 (2.7%)	37 (3.1%)	34 (5.3%)	27 (4.2%)
No response	2 (0.2%)	1 (0.1%)	-	-

Several of the Candidates interviewed indicated that they were not aware of the support and assistance available to them, reporting they “don’t know” who to contact and observing “huge gaps in communication.” Other Candidates suggested that their university’s support and assistance arrangements were not operating effectively, particularly for international Candidates.

I just feel like people didn’t care. Like it just felt like there was no-one who was responsible for it, you know. Like my supervisors were like, “Well, we’ve got no idea. Ask this person.” And then the HDR co-ordinator was like, “Oh, this is a question for [graduate research office]” ...There just isn’t... one point of service for international students ... (Candidate Interview 24, female, PhD, international student).

Participants provided information on the effectiveness of their university’s policies and procedures for addressing unacceptable behaviours. Notably, less than half of Candidates (476, 39.4%) and Supervisors (288, 44.9%) ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that university policies and procedures were effective in addressing unacceptable behaviours. Furthermore, more than a third of Candidates (453, 37.5%) and Supervisors (225, 35.1%) were equivocal about the effectiveness of the policies and procedures (Table 21).

Table 21. Effectiveness of university policies and procedures (Candidates and Supervisors)

University policies and procedures are effective in addressing unacceptable behaviours	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No response
Candidates (n=1,207)	92 (7.6%)	179 (14.8%)	453 (37.5%)	369 (30.6%)	107 (8.9%)	7 (0.6%)
Supervisors (n=641)	36 (5.6%)	92 (14.4%)	225 (35.1%)	236 (36.8%)	52 (8.1%)	-

On available support and assistance to meet their needs, Table 22 shows that whilst most Candidates (716, 59.3%) and Supervisors (442, 69.0%) ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the statement that ‘University student/staff and support services can provide me with the necessary assistance’, almost one in five Candidates (209, 17.3%) and more than one in 10 of Supervisors (74, 11.5%) either ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’ with this statement.

Table 22. Effectiveness of university support services (Candidates and Supervisors)

University student/staff and support services can provide me with the assistance I need	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No response
Candidates (n=1,207)	61 (5.1%)	148 (12.3%)	279 (23.1%)	580 (48.1%)	136 (11.3%)	3 (0.2%)
Supervisors (n=641)	15 (2.3%)	59 (9.2%)	125 (19.5%)	343 (53.5%)	99 (15.4%)	-

As shown in Table 23, like responses around knowledge of university policies and procedures on unacceptable behaviours, over three-quarters of participants (1,417, 76.7%) indicated that they had at least ‘some’ knowledge about where to go to formally report or make a complaint about supervision relationship issues. Again, the overall percentage for Supervisors (553, 86.3%) was higher than that of Candidates (864, 71.6%). Furthermore, more than a quarter of Candidates indicated that they knew ‘very little’ or ‘nothing’ of these complaints processes (341, 28.3%).

Table 23. Knowledge of where to make a formal report or complaint (Candidates and Supervisors)

	Candidates (n=1,207)	Supervisors (n=641)
Nothing	63 (5.2%)	8 (1.2%)
Very little	278 (23.0%)	79 (12.3%)
Some	568 (47.1%)	275 (42.9%)
A lot	259 (21.5%)	246 (38.4%)
Everything	37 (3.1%)	32 (5.0%)
No response	2 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)

4.7.2 Support/advice seeking efforts

Participants provided information about their support/advice seeking efforts in response to challenging behaviours experienced in supervision that had the most impact on them. The surveys elicited information from both Candidates and Supervisors on the types of services or individuals from whom they sought support/advice.

4.7.2.1 Types of support or advice sought by Candidates and Supervisors

In relation to seeking support for the most impactful behaviour they had experienced in the supervisory relationship, approximately half of the Candidates responding to the online survey indicated that they had sought support or advice across the three categories of behaviours:

- 49.8% (n=336) of Candidates sought support or advice for the ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours
- 46.2% (n=86) of Candidates sought support or advice for the ‘crossed professional boundaries or acted unprofessionally’ behaviours
- 53.6% (n=141) of Candidates sought support or advice for the ‘unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against’ behaviours

Supervisors responding to the online survey indicated that they had sought support or advice across the three categories of behaviours:

- 47.7% (n=177) Supervisors sought support or advice for the ‘behaviours affecting supervision
- 27.1% (n=16) Supervisors sought support or advice for the ‘crossed professional boundaries or acted unprofessionally’ behaviours

- 55.6% (n=30) Supervisors sought support or advice for the ‘unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against’ behaviours

From two lists of supplied statements, one for Candidates and one for Supervisors, participants provided information about from whom they sought support or advice for the most impactful behaviour they had experienced across the different types of challenging behaviours.

Some statements appeared on both lists with some appearing in slightly different phrasing to match the perspective of the participant. Some statements only appeared on the supplied list for Candidates and some only for Supervisors.

Table 24. From whom participants sought support or advice for most impactful behaviour

Sources of support or advice	Ignored, overlooked or uncared for	Behaviours affecting supervision practice	Unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries		Unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against	
	Cand. (n=336*)	Super. (n=177*)	Cand. (n=86*)	Super. (n=16*)	Cand. (n=141*)	Super. (n=30*)
Fellow HDR candidate colleague / An academic or professional staff colleague	196 (58.3%)	144 (83.1%)	42 (48.8%)	12 (75.0%)	75 (53.2%)	24 (80.0%)
A member of my supervisory panel or review panel / A member of the Candidate’s panel	155 (46.1%)	60 (33.9%)	33 (38.4%)	8 (50.0%)	47 (33.3%)	11 (36.7%)
Friend or family member	177 (52.7%)	37 (20.9%)	42 (48.8%)	3 (18.8%)	76 (53.9%)	7 (23.3%)
Professional support (e.g., counsellor, doctor)	140 (41.7%)	22 (12.4%)	35 (40.7%)	5 (31.3%)	63 (44.7%)	3 (10.0%)
Postgraduate Coordinator	82 (24.4%)	60 (33.9%)	20 (23.3%)	4 (25.0%)	33 (23.4%)	14 (46.7%)
Graduate Research School	37 (11.0%)	34 (19.2%)	12 (14.0%)	1 (6.3%)	13 (9.2%)	5 (16.7%)
Postgraduate Dean	25 (7.4%)	15 (8.5%)	10 (11.6%)	4 (25.0%)	10 (7.1%)	2 (6.7%)
Another Department/Unit within my university	48 (14.3%)	1 (0.6%)	19 (22.1%)	-	24 (17.0%)	-
Senior colleague or staff member or mentor / Another senior university staff member	18 (5.4%)	1 (0.6%)	6 (7.0%)	-	8 (5.7%)	-
Another organisation/service/person outside of my university	21 (6.3%)	4 (2.3%)	12 (14.0%)	2 (12.5%)	-	1 (3.3%)
HDR or postgraduate student representative [Candidates ONLY]	36 (10.7%)	N/A	8 (9.3%)	N/A	17 (12.1%)	N/A
Head of School [Candidates ONLY]	26 (7.7%)	N/A	9 (10.5%)	N/A	11 (7.8%)	N/A

Faculty Dean [Candidates ONLY]	9 (2.7%)	N/A	3 (3.5%)	N/A	6 (4.3%)	N/A
Human Resources [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	12 (6.8%)	N/A	2 (12.5%)	N/A	3 (10.0%)
Student union / Union representatives	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.6%)	-	2 (12.5%)	-	2 (6.7%)
Australian Human Rights Commission [Candidates ONLY]	-	N/A	-	N/A	2 (1.4%)	N/A

* Participants were able to select more than one source of support or advice.

Table 24 shows the different individual and services from whom Candidates and Supervisors sought support. Depending on the type of challenging behaviour, some types of support or advice were more likely to be reported by participants than others. It should be noted that the number of participants who provided information, particularly Supervisors, was small.

The types of support or advice commonly reported by the participants were:

- ‘Fellow HDR candidate colleague / An academic or professional staff colleague’ – Candidates (48.8%-58.3%), Supervisors (75.0%-83.1%)
- ‘A member of my supervisory panel or review panel / A member of the Candidate’s panel’ – Candidates (33.3%-46.1%), Supervisors (33.9%-50.0%)
- ‘Friend or family member’ – Candidates (48.8%-53.9%), Supervisors (18.8%-23.3%)
- ‘Postgraduate Coordinator’ – Candidates (23.3%-24.4%), Supervisors (25.0%-46.7%)
- ‘Professional support (e.g., counsellor, doctor)’ – Candidates (40.7%-44.7%), Supervisors (10.0%-31.3%)

4.7.2.2 Candidate and Supervisors’ reflections on university support and assistance

These patterns of support seeking were reinforced in interviews. Reflecting findings in Table 24, Candidate’s reliance on HDR colleagues was discussed during interviews:

Well, the first couple of months I felt very isolated and because you never want to talk badly about your supervisor. But then some things happened, and I started to talk with my colleagues... just realising that we weren’t the bad ones because, if eight people are experiencing the same thing ... if everybody feels so miserable... that’s the support (Candidate Interview 18, female, PhD, international student).

Some Supervisors, recognising the value of Candidates gathering together, reported being proactive in establishing HDR hubs or labs and Candidates reported feeling less isolated through these initiatives.

Just by giving people more opportunities [to get together] makes you feel less alone. It makes you feel a bit, “Oh, well, maybe I haven’t got the best relationship with my supervisor but there are other members of staff who do care about [you and your candidature]” (Candidate Interview 27, male, PhD, domestic student).

A Supervisor, who was also their School's HDR Coordinator, similarly observed that "Peer-group gatherings were "a bit of a protective element for ... building up resilience if you are having issues with your supervisor."

Consistent with findings shown in Table 24, Candidates regularly identified in their interviews the assistance and support they received from other Supervisors during their candidature, often providing assurance that communications or behaviours from supervisory colleagues were inappropriate.

At those times I pull in my secondary supervisor... she's very good at sort of, I don't want to say pulling him into line but making, making those calls that I can't make. Just saying, "That's going to take too much time. So, we're not doing that," which is what I would like to say but I'm not in a position that I can do it (Candidate Interview 8, female, PhD, domestic student).

Supervisor's seeking support from colleagues, as indicated Table 24, was also reflected in the interviews, with Supervisors referring to supervisory relationship issues being managed within their team or School. Another stated that the faculty's Associate Dean, Research and Education was the person "who we've had to sort of bring in as sort of a third party to help us problem-solve these students that are just not meeting deadlines." Two Supervisors reflected that the role of PGCs was "not just to support students but to also support staff."

Review panels

Participant's reflection on review panels and associated processes during interviews was more mixed. Several Supervisors found the panels very helpful, both in expanding the expertise available to a Candidate and in providing an independent perspective. Other Supervisors reported proactively utilising reviews to help manage Candidate performance and other issues. Another Supervisor relayed a situation where a supervisory team sought assistance from the review panel to address deliverables that were not of a sufficient standard, noting that the "review process meant that [the Candidate] realised that we were serious in ways that just the regular supervision chats were not having that same impact".

Several other Supervisors were less positive, stating that the review panels "haven't felt that incredibly helpful" and highlighting how they had become a compliance-driven process. As one Supervisor noted:

I feel that it has degraded over time to become something that has an increasing number of boxes to be ticked and increasing formality in what gets covered and who does it ... The feedback that I get from students and my own experience is that it's lost its ability to actually help. It comes across as more punitive (Supervisor Interview 23, male).

In interviews, several Candidates highlighted their reluctance to raise issues with their review panels, highlighting the potentially adverse impact on relationships with their Supervisors and/or members of the review panel.

... I just feel like that's going to put a bit of a tinge, you know, on the whole relationship in general. You know, when you then complain behind their back and then it escalates and escalates. It's a fine line ... (Candidate Interview 7, male, PhD, international student).

Two Supervisors in interviews similarly acknowledged that the composition of panels was unlikely to help someone who “already would feel disempowered by an unequal relationship” as they were “not necessarily the most approachable people from the student’s perspective.” A key factor raised by both Candidates and Supervisors was the apparent conflict of interest in the composition of many review panels. One Supervisor noted:

A lot of the time, your panel is, is made up of people that, who know your supervisor, works with very closely. Either they’re very good friends or they’ve just worked with them for years and it’s pretty difficult to, you know, separate that (Supervisor Interview 16, female).

Post-Graduate Coordinators

As noted in Table 20, Candidates reported frequently seeking assistance from Post-Graduate Coordinators (PGCs) (23.3%-24.4%). Whilst some Supervisors indicated reservations about their effectiveness, others spoke of the value of these staff members, also called HDR “lead” or convenors or directors within their schools. These roles were described by one Supervisor as providing a resource to “talk about the complaints process” and by another as “built-in hierarchies to escalate things.”

Candidates’ views of PGCs were variable. Some Candidates described these staff as approachable, “on my side” and helpful in managing “stuff before it gets escalated in any official capacity.” Some Candidates expressed a reluctance to escalate issues to PGCs due to a lack of trust or not wanting to issue to “blow up”. Other Candidates relayed circumstances where PGCs were of less assistance in resolving issues, with some Candidates suggesting a tendency for risk aversion amongst these staff and wanted to “[avoid] conflict as much as possible.

Other academic staff

As highlighted in Table 24, a smaller number of Candidates reported reaching out to Heads of School, Postgraduate Deans, Faculty Deans, senior colleagues and other departments or units. During interviews, very few Candidates mentioned contact with these offices. One Candidate suggested that their Dean’s focus was not necessarily on Candidates’ wellbeing but rather they were “conflict-averse.”

In the online survey, relatively small percentages of Candidates (9.2%-14.0%) and Supervisors (6.3%-19.2%) reported approaching their university’s Graduate Research School for support. Interview participants similarly suggested that supervisory issues were rarely escalated to the university’s central graduate research office, with one Candidate suggesting that was “such a nuclear option.”

There were mixed views from participants about whether their graduate research office was helpful. One Candidate described their experience as “exceptional” and several Supervisors reported that staff were helpful in mediating an issue. However, other Candidates reported that the central services were difficult to contact and unresponsive. Both Candidates and Supervisors reported finding their graduate research office inflexible in how they approached supervisory problems, with Candidates noting their insistence on initiating

formal complaint mechanisms. Supervisors similarly reported finding these offices “inflexible to deal with the complexity” of a Candidate’s situation, compounding their anxiety.

4.7.3 Reporting and complaint pathways

In addition to eliciting information from participants about support/advice that they utilised in response to challenging behaviours experienced, information about whether they reported or made a complaint to the relevant sections of their university was also collected in the surveys. Information about the reasons for making or not making a report or complaint, their experience of pursuing the reporting and complaint pathways, and their perceptions on how the university respond and can improve the reporting or complaint process were examined.

4.7.3.1 Candidates and Supervisors pursuing a formal report or complaint

Candidates who had experienced any of the three categories of behaviours were asked if they had made a formal report or complaint about the behaviour. Very few Candidates made a formal report or complaint about the behaviours:

- 58 (8.6%) of Candidates who had experienced Supervisor behaviours that made them feel ignored, overlooked or uncared
- 18 (9.7%) of Candidates who had experienced Supervisor behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries
- 21 (8.0%) of Candidates who had experienced Supervisor behaviours that made them feel unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against

Only a small number of Supervisors made a formal report or complaint about the behaviours:

- 28 (7.5%) of Supervisors who had experienced behaviours from their Candidates affecting their supervision practice
- 6 (10.2%) of Supervisors who had experienced behaviours from their Candidates that they felt crossed professional boundaries or were unprofessional
- 8 (14.8%) of Supervisors who had experienced behaviours from their Candidates that made them feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against.

From two lists of supplied statements, one for Candidates and one for Supervisors, participants provided information about to whom they made a report or complaint for the most impactful behaviour they had experienced across the different types of challenging behaviours.

Some statements appeared on both lists with some appearing in slightly different phrasing to match the perspective of the participant. Some statements only appeared on the supplied list for Candidates and some only for Supervisors.

Table 25. To whom participants made a formal report or complaint about most impactful behaviour

Report or complaint made to	Ignored, overlooked or uncared for	Behaviours affecting supervision practice	Unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries		Unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against	
			Cand. (n=58*)	Super. (n=28*)	Cand. (n=18*)	Super. (n=6*)
Postgraduate Coordinator	27 (46.6%)	14 (50.0%)	8 (44.4%)	3 (50.0%)	11 (52.4%)	5 (62.5%)
Graduate Research School	14 (24.1%)	13 (46.4%)	3 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	7 (33.3%)	4 (50.0%)
Head of School	10 (17.2%)	6 (21.4%)	5 (27.8%)	1 (16.7%)	4 (19.0%)	1 (12.5%)
Postgraduate Dean	6 (10.3%)	6 (21.4%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (33.3%)	5 (23.8%)	2 (25.0%)
University complaint office/portal	15 (25.9%)	1 (3.6%)	10 (55.6%)	-	12 (57.1%)	-
Faculty Dean	5 (8.6%)	2 (7.1%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (9.5%)	-
Another senior university staff member	4 (6.9%)	1 (3.6%)	1 (5.6%)	-	2 (9.5%)	-
Supervisory panel/review panel	8 (13.8%)	2 (7.1%)	-	-	-	-
University security	-	-	1 (5.6%)	-	1 (4.8%)	1 (12.5%)
Another organisation or service outside of their university	3 (5.2%)	1 (3.6%)	2 (11.1%)	-	2 (9.5%)	-
Human Resources [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	2 (7.1%)	N/A	1 (16.7%)	N/A	2 (25.0%)
Student union [Candidates ONLY]	2 (3.4%)	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A
Police [Candidates ONLY]	-	N/A	1 (5.6%)	N/A	1 (4.8%)	N/A
Australian Human Rights Commission (Candidates ONLY)	-	N/A	-	N/A	1 (4.8%)	N/A

* Participants able to select more than one option.

Table 25 shows the different individuals or services to whom Candidates and Supervisors made a report or complaint. Depending on the type of challenging behaviour, some individuals or services were more likely to be reported by participants than others. It should be noted that the number of participants who provided information was small, particularly from Supervisors.

Responses from Candidates and Supervisors who experienced any challenging behaviours indicated that very few of them had made a formal report or complaint about the behaviours.

For participants who did make a report or complaint, the individuals or services commonly indicated by the participants were:

- 'Postgraduate Coordinators' – Candidates (44.4%-54.4%), Supervisors (50.0%-62.5%)
- 'Graduate Research School' – Candidates (16.7%-33.3%), Supervisors (33.3%-50.0%)
- 'Head of School' – Candidates (17.2%-27.8%), Supervisors (12.5%-21.4%)

- ‘Postgraduate Dean’ – Candidates (10.3%-23.8%), Supervisors (21.4%-33.3%)

Some notable findings.

- Candidates were more likely than Supervisors to utilise ‘University complaint office/portal’ to make a report or complaint.
- Supervisors rarely made reports or complaints to organisations outside of their university, with only one Supervisor (3.6%) doing so for the ‘behaviours affecting supervision practice’.
- Both Candidates and Supervisors rarely attempted to manage issues through their supervisory team or review panel.

4.7.3.2 Reasons for making a formal report or complaint – Candidates and Supervisors

From two lists of supplied statements, one for Candidates and one for Supervisors, participants provided information about the reasons for making a report or complaint for the most impactful behaviour they had experienced across the different types of challenging behaviours. Depending on the type of challenging behaviour, some reasons were more likely to be selected by participants than others.

Some statements appeared on both lists with some appearing in slightly different phrasing to match the perspective of the participant. Some statements only appeared on the supplied list for Candidates.

As noted previously, due to the very small number of Candidates and Supervisors who made a formal report or complaint about any challenging behaviours experienced, the number of responses regarding their reasons for doing so was also very small.

Table 26. Reasons for making a formal report or complaint about most impactful behaviour – Candidates and Supervisors

Reasons	Ignored, overlooked or uncared for	Behaviours affecting supervision practice	Unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries		Unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against	
	Cand. (n=58*)	Super. (n=28*)	Cand. (n=18*)	Super. (n=6*)	Cand. (n=21*)	Super. (n=8*)
I didn't want anyone else to experience the behaviour	38 (65.5%)	11 (39.3%)	14 (77.8%)	4 (66.7%)	16 (76.2%)	7 (87.5%)
I wanted my Candidate(s)/Supervisor(s) to know that the behaviour was disrespectful or inappropriate	29 (50.0%)	11 (39.3%)	12 (66.7%)	4 (66.7%)	11 (52.4%)	5 (62.5%)
My attempts to resolve the issue in other ways were unsuccessful	33 (56.9%)	17 (60.7%)	8 (44.4%)	4 (66.7%)	6 (28.6%)	6 (75.0%)

I wanted to set the standard of what's acceptable	26 (44.8%)	23 (82.1%)	11 (61.1%)	4 (66.7%)	12 (57.1%)	5 (62.5%)
I knew how to make a formal report or complaint	16 (27.6%)	9 (32.1%)	6 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	7 (33.3%)	5 (62.5%)
I knew that I had support	9 (15.5%)	15 (53.6%)	8 (44.4%)	1 (16.7%)	8 (38.1%)	4 (50.0%)
I wanted my Supervisor(s) to be held accountable for their behaviour [Candidates ONLY]	39 (67.2%)	N/A	13 (72.2%)	N/A	13 (61.9%)	N/A
I wanted my situation to change [Candidates ONLY]	5 (8.6%)	N/A	1 (5.6%)	N/A	1 (4.8%)	N/A
I wanted to be able to continue with my higher degree research [Candidates ONLY]	4 (6.9%)	N/A	1 (5.6%)	N/A	1 (4.8%)	N/A
I was told I should make a formal report or complaint [Candidates ONLY]	3 (5.2%)	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A
I wanted the issues to be formally documented [Candidates ONLY]	2 (3.4%)	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A

* Participants were able to select more than one reason.

Table 26 shows the reasons participants indicated for making a formal report or complaint. Despite the small number of participants who made a report or complaint, the reasons they selected offered an understanding for action taken.

For participants who did make a report or complaint, the reasons commonly selected for doing so were:

- 'I didn't want anyone else to experience the behaviour' – Candidates (65.5%-77.8%), Supervisors (39.3%-87.5%)
- 'I wanted my Candidate(s)/Supervisor(s) to know that the behaviour was disrespectful or inappropriate' – Candidates (50.0%-66.7%), Supervisors (39.3%-66.7%)
- 'My attempts to resolve the issue in other ways were unsuccessful' – Candidates (28.6%-56.9%), Supervisors (60.7%-75.0%)
- 'I wanted to set the standard of what's acceptable' – Candidates (44.8%-61.1%), Supervisors (66.7%-82.1%)

Specific to Candidates, a high number of them selected the reason for wanting 'my Supervisor(s) to be held accountable for their behaviour' (61.9%-72.2%).

4.7.3.3 Reasons for not making a formal report or complaint – Candidates and Supervisors

As noted previously, a larger number of participants did not make a formal report or complaint when they experienced any of the challenging behaviours compared with those who did.

Consistent with the format for collecting information about reasons for making a report or complaint, Candidates and Supervisors were provided with separate lists of supplied statements on possible reasons for not making a report or complaint for the most impactful behaviour they had experienced across the different types of challenging behaviours. Depending on the type of challenging behaviour, some reasons were more likely to be selected by participants than others.

Some statements appeared on both lists with some appearing in slightly different phrasing to match the perspective of the participant. Some statements only appeared on the supplied list for Candidates and some only for Supervisors.

Table 27. Reasons for not making a formal report or complaint about most impactful behaviour – Candidates and Supervisors

Reasons	Ignored, overlooked or uncared for	Behaviours affecting supervision practice	Unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries		Unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against	
	Cand. (n=607*)	Super. (n=338*)	Cand. (n=157*)	Super. (n=53*)	Cand. (n=232*)	Super. (n=46*)
I believed there would be negative consequences for me	311 (51.2%)	29 (8.6%)	96 (61.1%)	5 (9.4%)	137 (59.1%)	13 (28.3%)
I didn't think the issue was serious enough	359 (59.1%)	188 (55.6%)	62 (39.5%)	30 (56.6%)	96 (41.4%)	16 (34.8%)
I didn't think it would make a difference	255 (42.0%)	82 (24.3%)	68 (43.3%)	7 (13.2%)	118 (50.9%)	17 (37.0%)
I didn't want my Candidate(s)/Supervisor(s) to get in trouble	197 (16.3%)	55 (16.3%)	28 (17.8%)	10 (18.9%)	47 (20.3%)	14 (30.4%)
I thought it was normal for Candidates/Supervisors to experience it	214 (35.3%)	90 (26.6%)	30 (19.1%)	14 (26.4%)	50 (21.6%)	1 (2.2%)
I didn't have confidence in my university's formal processes	149 (24.5%)	25 (7.4%)	56 (35.7%)	5 (9.4%)	84 (36.2%)	6 (13.0%)
I didn't know who to talk to	96 (15.8%)	12 (3.6%)	32 (20.4%)	2 (3.8%)	53 (22.8%)	4 (8.7%)
I didn't feel like I had support from anyone	93 (15.3%)	22 (6.5%)	44 (28.0%)	3 (5.7%)	60 (25.9%)	7 (15.2%)
I didn't think I would be believed	50 (8.2%)	6 (1.8%)	27 (17.2%)	2 (3.8%)	49 (21.1%)	2 (4.3%)
The issue was resolved through other means	37 (6.1%)	58 (17.2%)	3 (1.9%)	7 (13.2%)	5 (2.2%)	8 (17.4%)
I was advised not to tell anyone	24 (4.0%)	4 (1.2%)	8 (5.1%)	1 (1.9%)	17 (7.3%)	1 (2.2%)
I thought the process of reporting would be too stressful	4 (0.7%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.6%)	-	2 (0.9%)	-

I didn't think it was my supervisor(s) fault [Candidate ONLY]	22 (3.6%)	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A
I felt intimidated by my supervisor(s) [Candidate ONLY]	14 (2.3%)	N/A	6 (3.8%)	N/A	3 (1.3%)	N/A
I thought I was in the wrong [Candidate ONLY]	4 (0.7%)	N/A	-	N/A	2 (0.9%)	N/A
I'm waiting until after I submit my thesis to report the behaviour [Candidate ONLY]	2 (0.3%)	N/A	-	N/A	2 (0.9%)	N/A
I thought the candidate(s) could deal with the consequences of their behaviour themselves [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	5 (1.5%)	N/A	-	N/A	-
I expected more senior members of the supervisory team to deal with the situation [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	4 (1.2%)	N/A	-	N/A	-
I understood why they were acting this way [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	8 (2.4%)	N/A	-	N/A	-
It would create more work for me [Supervisors ONLY]	N/A	1 (0.3%)	N/A	-	N/A	-

* Participants were able to select more than one reason.

Table 27 shows the reasons participants indicated for not making a formal report or complaint. The reasons they selected offered an understanding for their decisions and potential barriers to reporting challenging behaviours in supervisory relationships.

For participants who did not make a report or complaint, the reasons commonly selected for the decisions were:

- 'I didn't think the issue was serious enough' – Candidates (39.5%-59.1%), Supervisors (34.8%-56.6%)
- 'I didn't think it would make a difference' – Candidates (42.0%-50.9%), Supervisors (13.2%-37.0%)
- 'I didn't want my Candidate(s)/Supervisor(s) to get in trouble' – Candidates (16.3%-20.3%), Supervisors (16.3%-30.4%)
- 'I thought it was normal for Candidates/Supervisors to experience it' – Candidates (19.1%-35.3%, Supervisors (2.2%-26.6%)

There were some responses to the reasons supplied that show there might be a difference between Candidates and Supervisors in their perception consequences and confidence in reporting.

- 'I believed there would be negative consequences for me' – Candidates (51.2%-61.1%), but a less concern for Supervisors (8.6%-28.3%)

- 'I didn't have confidence in my university's formal processes' – Candidates (24.5%-36.2%), but a less concern for Supervisors (7.4%-13.0%)

Reflecting findings detailed, several Candidates reported in interviews that they intended to make a formal complaint after they had completed their research. For example,

I'm trying to get something finished and completed, and ... But I also feel some guilt. I don't want anyone else to have to go through this, so ... probably, when I come towards the end, I will maybe put in a formal complaint. But I want to make sure I'm finished my PhD before I do that (Candidate Interview 6, male, PhD, international student).

4.7.3.4 Candidate experiences of university reporting and complaint processes

In examining the effectiveness of their university's reporting and complaint processes, Candidates who made a formal report or complaint provided information about their experiences. Across the three types of challenging behaviours, of the 97 Candidates who made a formal report or complaint about any of the behaviours, less than half of them (42, 43.3%) had a representative from their university who explained the formal reporting or complaint processes to them, and only a quarter of them (26, 26.8%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the process. Concerningly, only 17 (17.5%) of Candidates were informed of the outcome of their report or complaint, and less than half of them (41.2%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome.

4.7.3.5 Candidate suggestions on how to encourage HDR candidates to make a formal report or complaint

In the online survey, Candidates offered suggestions as to how university complaint and reporting systems could be enhanced. For example:

- Universities should be more proactive in supporting HDR Candidates to make complaints/reports and then providing updates on the process to ensure transparency.
- Policies and procedures should be simple to use and consistently applied, with clear and secure avenue/s to lodge complaints, information about who to contact, and an opportunity to report anonymously.
- Universities should ensure that there will be no repercussions or reprisals to a Candidate making a report, recognising Candidate concerns about potential backlash given the inherent power dynamics in the Candidate-Supervisor relationship.
- Universities should emphasise the confidentiality of the report or complaint provided.
- Universities need to provide clarity on how complaints and support systems operate, including information on the processes that would occur following the complaint and a flow chart or visual graphic of how complaints are handled.

Survey responses further suggested that the following materials would be helpful to Candidates. For example:

- Hypothetical examples of what is considered inappropriate or poor behaviour in a supervisory relationship.

- Scenarios around how a formal complaint may impact on the HDR Candidate's experience moving forward.
- Information on how to maintain a functional relationship with a Supervisor after reporting, citing examples of how Supervisor-HDR Candidate relationships progress after a formal report.

Candidates suggested that there should be regular communication from the university about expectations of respectful behaviours from students and staff, relevant policies and processes, and reporting and complaints pathways. Candidates suggested that multiple modes be used to actively and regularly communicate with HDRs, including:

- a user-friendly web page, possibly on the university's central graduate research office website
- highly visible print information including posters
- periodic emails to Candidates regarding the support available, emphasising that it is safe to report
- monthly notices on HDR websites and in graduate research service newsletters, promoting that help is available for supervision issues, with a clear list of what steps candidates themselves can initially pursue, then what to do next, with up-to-date contact details for key personnel.

4.7.3.6 Candidate suggestions about how the process for making a formal report or complaint could be improved

Candidates provided suggestions in the online survey about how the process for making a formal report or complaint could be improved. In addition to the process and guidance suggestions detailed above, Candidate responses emphasised on the need for greater accountability from their institutions. For example, as one Candidate noted: "Don't have an environment where there are no consequences for professional misconduct."

Candidates highlighted that supervisory complaints were often treated in an episodic manner, compromising accountability. Candidate responses reinforced that "if the same supervisor has frequent issues, it must be taken seriously."

Candidates recognised the inherent structural barriers to greater accountability such as complaints "need to be triaged outside of the school so students are prioritized over the protection of peers" because "quite a few issues are triaged and assessed by other academics – who think twice about taking remedial action because they're also afraid of burning bridges with their own colleagues, even if there is bad practice or less-than-ideal actions going on."

To remedy this constraint, some Candidates suggested that an independent external complaints avenue is required to ensure investigations are conducted that "actually prioritise human rights and harm done rather than protecting the reputation of the institution at all costs".

4.7.3.7 Supervisor experiences of university reporting and complaint processes

The 42 Supervisors who indicated they had made a formal report or complaint provided information about their experiences of their university's processes.

Across the three types of challenging behaviours, just over half of Supervisors (24, 57.1%) had a representative from their university to explain the formal reporting or complaint processes to them, and the same number (24, 57.1%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the process, more than double the satisfaction rate of Candidates.

In contrast to Candidates' experiences, more than seven in 10 Supervisors (30, 71.4%) were informed about the outcome of their report or complaint. Of these 30 Supervisors, just over half (16, 53.3%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome. As for Candidates' findings, these figures suggest that university reporting and complaints processes also require further attention from Supervisors' perspective.

4.7.3.8 Supervisor suggestions about how the process for making a formal report or complaint could be improved

Consistent with Candidates' responses, many Supervisors in the online survey emphasised the need for greater accountability from their institutions when challenges arose with Candidates or supervisory colleagues. For example, "abusive behaviour from HDR candidates to supervisors should be acknowledged" and "Schools need to take repeated complaints seriously and have actions that protect staff from other staff who behave inappropriately".

From a supplied list of statements on ways universities can improve the supervision experience, more than one in five Supervisors indicated the value of their university having 'an independent body, or section within the university, where HDR candidates can raise issues and concerns' (23.6%) and 'a transparent process making it clear what happens when a report or complaint is made' (20.6%).

When problems arose, one Supervisor suggested that a "monitoring system and workflow should be established to ensure that both HDR candidates and supervisors receive fair and equal support from the university in cases where behaviour crosses the professional boundaries." Another commented on the need for "transparent and timely reporting and decision process by GRS."

5. CONCLUSIONS

The centrality of the supervisory relationship in supporting Candidates to achieve success, and its effects on the supervision experience for both Candidates and Supervisors, are well documented.¹⁴ Drawing on survey responses and individual interview accounts from domestic and international Candidates and Supervisors from 10 universities of varying sizes and levels of research intensity across Australia, the aim of the current study was to examine the relationship issues commonly arising between Candidates and Supervisors that can negatively affect the supervisory relationship and the overall HDR experience.

Overall, findings showed that a large proportion of the Candidates and Supervisors who participated in this study found the supervision experience to be satisfying. The reasons provided for their satisfaction reflect and demonstrate the importance of interpersonal dynamics in engendering a positive experience such as the Candidates' responsiveness to Supervisors' guidance and the Supervisors' availability for Candidates' academic and personal needs. Conversely, and unsurprisingly, when these interpersonal dynamics did not provide the desired responsiveness and support or when the expectations were not met, the supervision experience was perceived to be unsatisfying, and possibly detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing, and obstacles to a successful HDR candidature.

In the context of interpersonal dynamics, sharing the same cultural and/or language backgrounds were perceived by some study participants to be helpful in the overall supervision experience. The helpfulness through sharing of these backgrounds facilitates rapport and discussion pertaining to challenges in supervision (particularly for Supervisors) and personal needs (particularly for Candidates). In this regard, considerations need to be given to cultural and languages differences in efforts to promote a positive and effective supervision experience.

Notwithstanding the satisfaction indicated with their overall supervision experience, and the high percentage of study participants who indicated they had received training on supervision related issues such as acceptable and respectful behaviours, some Candidates and Supervisors indicated that they had to contend with challenging behaviours in their supervisory relationships. Of the different types of challenging behaviours examined in this study, the most common types pertain to behaviours that made Candidates feel ignored, overlooked or uncared for, and behaviours that made Supervisors feel their supervision practice had been affected. These behaviours reflected the interpersonal dynamics between Candidates and Supervisors that can enhance the supervision experience, or indeed, as over half Candidates and Supervisors in this study indicated, affected their experience and perceived to have undermined their abilities to progress their candidatures or supervision practices. When compared with behaviours that affected Candidates' progress or Supervisors' practice, study participants' responses showed that unprofessional behaviours or those that crossed professional boundaries ('unprofessional' behaviours), and those that made Candidates and Supervisors feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against ('unsafe' behaviours) were less common.

A notable and encouraging finding from participants' responses is that sexual violence was not an experience this group of Candidates and Supervisors encountered. Only two

Candidates indicated in their surveys that they had experienced sexual harassment by their Supervisors and no participant indicated that non-consensual sex had occurred. Although the overall number of participants who experienced unprofessional or unsafe behaviours was small, they were more likely to have been experienced by Candidates than Supervisors. Despite the relatively low number reported by participants, the effects of any challenging behaviours on individuals who experienced them should not be understated, for they can be profound and lasting. The effects can destabilise and weaken supervisory relationships to such an extent that performance and productivity are compromised and, in the case of Candidates, derail their candidature through insufficient progress. Furthermore, the effects of the challenging behaviours examined can cause harm by severely affecting the affected person's mental health, physical health, and sense of wellbeing. In this context, the availability of support, and perhaps more pertinently, an approach that encourages individuals to utilise available formal and informal support can serve to ameliorate a sense of isolation and the negative effects resulting from challenging behaviours experienced.

On the issue of support, whilst most of the study participants indicated that they had at least some knowledge about support and assistance offered by their university when experiencing challenging behaviours, only about half who experienced any challenging behaviours had sought support. When they did, informal support from fellow Candidates, academic or professional colleagues was the preferred type of support. This finding is consistent with research findings highlighting the importance of informal support or conversations with peers and colleagues in academic settings as a viable means to address study and work-related issues.¹⁵ Furthermore, the likelihood of affected individuals seeking informal support or conversations gives emphasis to the need for universities to institute mandatory training on awareness and appropriate response to revelation of challenging behaviours for all Candidates and Supervisors. The mandatory training would enhance the appropriate support provided by peers or colleagues of individuals affected by challenging behaviours experienced in their supervisory relationships.

Despite the small number of participants who provided information on making a formal report or complaint following experiences of challenging behaviours, the study findings suggested that formal reporting was an unlikely action that affected individuals would take. Although over 75% of study participants indicated they had at least some knowledge of their university's policies and procedures in addressing unacceptable behaviours, the effectiveness of these policies and procedures from the participants' perspective was less promising. Given more than a third of participants were equivocal about their effectiveness, and more concerningly, more than one in five participants disagreed that they were effective at all, these findings affirmed the need for universities to make their policies and procedures to be even clearer and more accessible. These changes could instil confidence in Candidates and Supervisors that formal processes are not only available, but they will address their concerns and experiences in a transparent, safe and helpful manner. Findings from this study support previous related research findings that underscored the position that reporting policies and support initiative must consider and align with the needs of those affected to ensure revictimisation and retraumatisation do not occur, and that they are perceived to be sensitive and effective in promoting safety.¹⁶ The suggestions offered by both Candidates and Supervisors in this study about ways to improving the reporting process provided crucial insights into their needs such as greater accountability from their universities, and

confidence in the independence of the review and investigation process following a report or complaint.

The findings from this study provided useful information about supervisory relationship issues that can negatively affect the supervision experience and satisfaction as perceived by Candidates and Supervisors. The findings also draw attention to support needs of affected individuals as well as the effectiveness of university reporting processes in responding to and managing challenges and difficulties experienced. These findings offer universities valuable learnings and understanding of not only the types of challenging behaviours that can stymied candidatures and undermine supervisory relationships, but the experiences of affected Candidates and Supervisors and clarity into how processes can be enhanced to ensure a positive and constructive supervision experience for both Candidates and Supervisors.

Areas for further attention

The findings from this study offered a deeper understanding of many aspects of the supervisory relationships, and how they are managed. Based on these findings, further attention could be given to the following areas.

Reporting. The very small number of Candidates and Supervisors who utilised the available formal reporting pathways following experiences of challenging behaviours requires further attention. The reasons provided by participants for making, and more pertinently, not making a formal report and complaint need to be examined to improve the perception of effectiveness in university policies and procedures that aim to address unacceptable behaviours. The apparent low confidence in university policies and procedures to effectively prevent and respond to challenging behaviours experienced in supervisory relationships is a concern.

Health considerations. Findings showed that challenging behaviours experienced in supervisory relationships can have detrimental effects. Both Candidates and Supervisors participated in this study indicated that these behaviours had negatively affected their mental health, physical health, and general sense of wellbeing. Informed by current knowledge of the high levels of distress related to work and study pressures experienced in academia, mental health and other health-related concerns in the specific context of higher degree research as experienced by Candidates and Supervisors is an area requiring further research.

Early career Supervisors. A very large number of Supervisors who participated in this study were senior academics and highly experienced in HDR supervision. Informed by the study findings on challenges encountered and their effects on Supervisors in supervisory relationships, it would be useful to focus on the needs of junior academics with less experience with HDR supervision to determine how they might be further supported in ways that could enhance their supervision experience, which in turn, could also benefit Candidates for whom they provide supervision.

6. APPENDIX A – Supervisory arrangements at participating universities

1. Australian National University (ANU)

ANU's supervisory panels have a minimum of three members for a PhD candidate or professional doctorate candidate and two members for a MPhil. A supervisory panel comprises a Primary Supervisor and Associate Supervisors, and a Chair of Panel either from that group or as an additional member.¹⁷

The Chair of the Panel is “responsible for oversight of all aspects of a candidate’s program and ensuring that the conduct of candidature and conduct of supervision is aligned with the University’s Research Awards Rule and HDR Policy Framework.”¹⁸

The role of the Primary Supervisor is to:

- provide academic oversight of the major research aspects of a candidate’s program,
- monitor the quality of a candidate’s work,
- identify relevant skills training that may be required for successful completion, through the candidate-supervisor agreement,
- identify relevant ethics approvals that may be required,
- assist the candidate with submission of ethics applications, and
- carry responsibility in supporting the completion of candidature within the University’s timeframes.¹⁹

The role of an Associate Supervisor is to “provide additional advice and expertise for a candidate with regards to their research. Support is provided through communications throughout the year at agreed timeframes. The level of support provided is variable depending on the stage of candidature and the agreed needs of the candidate as established by the candidate-supervisor agreement.”²⁰

2. James Cook University (JCU)

JCU uses the terms ‘advisor’ and ‘advisory panel’. Each candidate has an ‘Advisory Panel’, “nominated by the Associate Dean Research Education (ADRE) on behalf of the College Dean and approved by the Dean, Graduate Research (or nominee) to undertake the day-to-day supervision of the HDR candidate.”²¹

The panel must include at least two and up to a maximum of four Advisors, at least two of whom must be on the JCU Register of Advisors. A Primary Advisor leads the panel with at least one Secondary Advisor. Up to two External Advisors in addition to the Primary and Secondary Advisor can be appointed to the Panel. A panel may also include an Advisor Mentor who can develop the advisory capacity of the other members of the Advisory Panel.²²

A Primary Advisor will be on the JCU Register of Advisors and “will be a member of the academic staff (or adjunct or conjoint staff) of the College in which the candidate is enrolled, or be otherwise formally contracted and accountable to the University for supervisory

duties.”²³ The Primary Advisor leads the Advisory Panel and the effective supervision of the candidate, guiding alignment of research with award requirements including to:

- inform the scope and focus of the research supporting and enabling the research education of the candidate and acculturation into their research community
- oversee milestone management to support the candidate’s achievement of timely progress to completion
- ensure effective communication within the advisory panel
- guide and reporting on candidature milestones
- Inform the scope and focus of the research.²⁴

A Secondary Advisor will be on the JCU Register of Advisors and “works with the candidate, the Primary Advisor and other panel members to enable progress to enable timely completion.”²⁵ Their contribution may include disciplinary knowledge and expertise, knowledge of research methods and methodology and/or knowledge of research education.²⁶

3. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)

The minimum requirements for a supervisory team at RMIT are a senior supervisor and an associate supervisor per candidate. Supervisory teams may also be comprised of:

- two joint senior supervisors,
- one senior and several associate supervisors, or
- two joint senior supervisors and one or more associates.²⁷

The senior supervisor provides the overall academic leadership to the candidate on their research project.²⁸ Any major decisions concerning the academic direction of the candidates’ research require the agreement of both joint senior supervisors, where applicable. Associate supervisors’ roles in the supervision of a candidate may vary, depending on the candidate’s supervisory requirements.²⁹

4. Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne)

Swinburne University have three categories of supervisors: Principal Supervisor, Co-Supervisor and Associate Supervisor.³⁰ HDRs at Swinburne must be supervised by a minimum of two appropriately registered and accredited academic supervisors³¹ comprising a Principal Supervisor and a Co-Supervisor. Additional members may be added to the team to a maximum of three supervisors. An Associate Supervisor may be appointed from outside the University.

Swinburne’s *Research Training Statement of Practice* states that “All supervisors must be on the Swinburne Register of Accredited Supervisors to supervise candidates.”³² The criteria for each supervisory category are:

Principal Supervisor:

- must be a Swinburne academic staff member,
- must be an active researcher,
- must hold a PhD, and

- must have supervised at least one HDR candidate to completion before being eligible to be accredited as Principal Supervisor.

Co-Supervisor:

- is either a Swinburne academic staff member or an academic staff member at another university,
- must be an active researcher, and
- must hold a PhD.

Associate Supervisor:

- is a Swinburne academic staff member who does not hold a PhD and will supervise at Master's level, only; or
- is employed at a non-academic research institution (e.g., an industry partner), who may or may not hold a PhD. External associate supervisors who hold a PhD may supervise at PhD or Masters level. Those with only a Masters may supervise Master candidates only.³³

5. (The) University of Adelaide (Adelaide)

At Adelaide, all candidates will have a panel of supervisors comprising a principal and at least one co- or external supervisor, appointed by the Head of School.³⁴ All supervisors will be on the University's register in accordance with the Research Education and Supervision Policy.³⁵

The principal supervisor will be a member of the academic staff of the school, or an affiliate, adjunct, titleholder or clinical titleholder with that school. The principal supervisor carries primary responsibility for supervision (a minimum of 60% where there are three supervisors on the panel), including the coordination of all communication between the supervisors and the candidate.³⁶

Other members of the supervisory panel are referred to as 'co-supervisors' or 'external supervisors'.

- A co-supervisor is an academic staff member or titleholder with any of the University's schools.
- An external supervisor is not an academic staff member and normally has no formal affiliation with, or responsibility to the University (visiting academics and professional staff are classified as external supervisors for the purposes of the register).³⁷

6. (The) University of Melbourne (UoM)

All candidates commencing at Melbourne after 1 January 2017 must have at least two supervisors.³⁸ All supervisors must have theoretical and methodological expertise relevant to the candidate's research project.³⁹ One supervisor must be designated as the principal supervisor; other supervisors are referred to as co-supervisors and can include external supervisors.

“The principal supervisor -

- a) must be a member of the academic department of the candidate unless otherwise approved by the relevant dean;
- b) has administrative responsibility for the candidate; and
- c) must be a registered supervisor who has maintained supervisor training in accordance with policy requirements.”⁴⁰

“Principal supervisors must be:

- (a) academic staff members of the University in a continuing or fixed-term role who:
 - i. hold a doctoral degree, or have equivalent research experience; and
 - ii. are classified at Level B or above; and
 - iii. have continuing active participation in original research, or are otherwise making original contributions to research and publishing, as determined by the relevant faculty criteria, approved by the dean; or
- (b) Professors emeritus or honorary fellows who hold a doctoral degree or have equivalent research experience and have continuing active participation in original research; or
- (c) clinical honorary fellows at Level B or above who hold a doctoral degree or have equivalent research experience and have continuing active participation in original research.”⁴¹

“Co-supervisors have a more specific or secondary role in the supervision of a candidate’s research.”⁴² Co-supervisors must be any person eligible to be a principal supervisor; or, subject to the approval of the relevant dean, academic staff members in a continuing or fixed-term role at Level A and who have a continuing active participation in original research.⁴³

External supervisors must be appropriately qualified with sufficient professional experience to assist in supervision; and approved by the dean.⁴⁴

7. University of New South Wales (UNSW)

At UNSW all HDR candidates must have a supervisory team of at least two supervisors.⁴⁵ Each team must have either a primary or joint supervisor appointed, who will be the designated administrative contact for the purpose of communicating about the candidature.⁴⁶ At least one of the joint supervisors must meet the eligibility criteria for being a primary supervisor.⁴⁷ In addition, secondary or external supervisors may be appointed. Supervisory ‘panels’ are used when the research project requires a range of expertise and experience, such as multi-disciplinary or industry focussed projects.⁴⁸

The supervisory team must:

- have the appropriate qualifications, experience, and disciplinary expertise to supervise the candidate’s research and candidature.
- hold academic tenure which normally exceeds the expected duration of the candidature.
- demonstrate active engagement with supervision of the candidate.⁴⁹

According to UNSW's *Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure*,

- A primary supervisor takes responsibility for the academic supervision of the candidature.
- Joint supervision is where two supervisors have a formal, equal collaboration and share resources to support the candidature. Joint supervisors take equal responsibility for the academic supervision of the candidature.
- A secondary supervisor has specific expertise related to the candidate's research and assists in the academic supervision of the candidature.
- An external supervisor has specialist expertise related to the candidate's research and can include staff from other universities, industry, business, government, or non-government organisations.⁵⁰

8. (The) University of Sydney (USyd)

At Sydney, each student must be supported and guided by a supervisory team consisting of a minimum of two supervisors.⁵¹ All supervisors must be:

- a current continuing or fixed term member of University staff or a current affiliate of the University;
- research active;
- qualified to undertake research supervision appropriate to the discipline by:
 - holding a qualification at AQF Level 10; or
 - having equivalent professional or research experience;
- and approved for registration as a supervisor of higher degree by research students.⁵²

The key functions of the lead supervisor role are to:

- ensure that appropriate resources and support are available to assist the student's progression;
- meet administrative requirements;
- ensure that the supervisory team provides timely, honest and effective commentary on student progression to the evaluation processes;
- represent the supervisors when responding to queries about the candidature from the school or faculty; and
- coordinate supervisory responsibilities in the examination process.⁵³

Additional supervisors may be appointed to fulfil specific roles in the candidature. Such individuals may include, but are not limited to:

- a person with appropriate knowledge required for part of a student's candidature;
- a person whose links with industry enable a student to have access to specialised equipment and facilities; or
- a person in an external institution or university who is an expert on the subject matter.
 - Individuals from external institutions will be registered as external supervisors.⁵⁴

All members of the supervisory team must:

- support and advise the student in research activities, noting that the extent

- of project leadership will vary with academic discipline;
- facilitate the student's access to the agreed resources necessary for the student to succeed; and
- advise the student regarding effective research and professional outcomes, including access to careers information.⁵⁵

9. University of Tasmania (UTas)

At UTas, each candidate has a nominated 'supervision team' which comprises two or three supervisors including a primary supervisor, at least one co-supervisor and may include an experienced supervisor or research advisor.⁵⁶ The primary supervisor will have a load of at least 50 percent with the remaining load being split with the other member(s) of the supervisory team. Except where approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, no supervisor will have less than 20 percent load share.⁵⁷ Requests for four supervisors can be made to the Pro Vice-Chancellor where it is considered critical to the successful supervision of the project; in this case, the primary supervisor will be 40 percent and each co-supervisor is 20 percent.⁵⁸

According to the UTas *Research Training Policy*, "Higher degree research supervisors will provide candidates with intellectual support, procedural guidance, and broad pastoral care in the design and conduct of the higher degree by research program and facilitate and support the timely completion of candidature."⁵⁹

The UTas *HDR Supervision and Academic Support Procedure* provides for different types of supervisors:

- a primary supervisor is an academic employee of the University who will provide leadership to the HDR supervisory team. The primary supervisor is "responsible for ensuring a candidate is aware of and understands all academic, administrative, and regulatory requirements they must meet." The primary supervisor "will ensure a candidate receives appropriate guidance in their project and support toward successful completion of their thesis and its examination."⁶⁰
- A co-supervisor is an academic employee of the University or adjunct or clinical title holder who works "closely with a primary supervisor to support, guide, and advise a candidate in the conduct of their research project, drawing on their specific research expertise."⁶¹
- an experienced supervisor is an academic employee of the University or adjunct or clinical title holder who fulfils "a mentoring role to less experienced supervisors on the supervisory team."⁶²
- a research advisor provides "specialist knowledge and/or expertise to a candidate, although they may not be active in research. A research advisor may be internal or external to the University (such as an industry partner), is not a registered supervisor and is not required to meet the supervisor registration eligibility criteria."⁶³

10. (The) University of Western Australia (UWA)

At UWA, at least two supervisors must be appointed for each student by the Graduate Research School, including one Principal Supervisor and a Coordinating supervisor. In cases

where the Principal and Coordinating Supervisor are the same person, a co-supervisor must be appointed. One or more external supervisors may also be appointed.⁶⁴

The Principal Supervisor “primary academic leadership in the supervision” and must:

- be research active as defined in the Register of Supervisors – Procedures
- have research expertise and experience relevant to the area of the student’s proposed research and
- provide evidence of continuing and active involvement in research.⁶⁵

The Coordinating supervisor must be an employee of this University and “takes primary responsibility for the academic management of the student’s candidature and ensuring that all administrative and reporting requirements of the supervision are met.”⁶⁶ A co-supervisor “will have specific expertise that is useful to the student’s research program and will be available as an independent person from whom the student may seek advice during the course of the candidature.” A co-supervisor need not be a UWA employee but will be expected otherwise to hold adjunct, emeritus or honorary research fellow status and be registered on the UWA Register of Supervisors.⁶⁷

7. APPENDIX B – Interview schedules

Candidate interviews

Background

Firstly we'd like to ask you a series of background questions about your HDR program. You've answered all of these questions in the online survey but that was entirely anonymous so we just want to get a feel for your circumstances before we ask the more substantive questions.

1. Are you currently enrolled full-time, part-time or on program leave?
2. Did you choose your own topic or was it an existing research project you joined?
3. In what physical space do you usually work to complete your HDR research? (in an office on campus / in a laboratory on campus / in a studio on campus / not on campus (e.g., working from home, working at another organisation))
4. How many years of your HDR research have you completed?
 - a. When do you anticipate will you be completing your HDR research?
5. Are you currently employed by the university where you are completing your HDR research?
 - a. Is your employment at your university associated with any of your HDR supervisors?
6. For your HDR program, do you have one supervisor or multiple supervisors (e.g., primary supervisor and secondary or joint supervisors)?
7. Do you have a supervision agreement or contract which sets out expectations for your HDR candidature?
8. How often do your supervision meetings occur?
9. Where do your supervision meetings primarily occur?
10. Have you changed supervisors during your candidature? If so, why?
11. Overall, how satisfied are you with your current HDR supervision experience?

Personal experiences

This research study aims to examine the workplace relationship issues commonly arising between HDR candidates and their supervisors, and how these issues are managed within Australian universities. You've already undertaken the survey so you're aware of the sorts of issues we're keen to explore – themes like:

- *Mismatched expectations and communication problems*
- *Supervisor performance issues (e.g., availability to meet, timeliness of feedback, depth of feedback)*
- *Conflicts of interest and issues around research integrity (e.g., appropriation of work)*
- *Bullying and other inappropriate behaviours*

You indicated when registering your interest to participate in an interview that you'd experienced these sorts of situations while you've been a HDR candidate.

1. If you're comfortable, can you explain how the situation/s arose and how it developed?
2. Who was involved? (e.g., primary supervisor / secondary supervisor) Was it just one of your supervisors or all of your supervisory team?
3. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor/s? (peer / collegial / traditional)
4. Were there any factors that impacted the situation? (e.g., differences in age / gender / cultural background / language)

Reporting or seeking assistance

Thinking now about how the issue was managed...

1. Did you seek support or report the situation to anyone? If not, why not?
2. Who was involved? (e.g., another supervisor / panel member / another HDR / postgrad coordinator etc)
3. If you sought assistance, were you provided with the supports that you needed?
4. If you reported the situation, how was the issue escalated / managed? By whom?
5. In your view, was the situation satisfactorily resolved?
6. What has been the longer-term impact of this situation on you, your research?

General questions (time allowing)

- Are you aware of other HDRs experiencing similar situations?
- Do you have any suggestions as to how HDR supervisory relationships could be better managed / supported?

Supervisor interviews

Background

Firstly we'd like to ask you a series of background questions about your HDR supervision experience. You've answered all of these questions in the survey but that was entirely anonymous so we just want to get a feel for your circumstances before we ask the more substantive questions.

1. What is your current position?
2. How long have you been employed at the university?
3. What is the basis of your employment?
4. In which HDR programs do you currently supervise candidates? (Masters by research / PhD / Professional Doctorate)
5. How long have you been supervising HDR candidates?
6. How many HDR candidates have you supervised to completion?
7. How many HDR candidates are you currently supervising?
8. Is that generally as a primary supervisor or secondary or joint supervisors (or a mix)?
9. How would you describe your approach to your supervision relationships (peer / collegial / hierarchical)
10. Where do you usually meet with or otherwise interact with you HDR candidates?
11. Are you currently employing any of your current HDR candidates?
12. Do you have a supervision agreement or contract which sets out expectations for your HDR candidates?
13. Have you withdrawn or been removed from a HDR supervisory role?
14. Have you ever been subject to a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) in relation to your HDR supervisory role?

Personal experiences

This research study aims to examine the workplace relationship issues commonly arising between HDR candidates and their supervisors, and how these issues are managed within Australian universities. You've already undertaken the survey so you're aware of the sorts of issues we're keen to explore – themes like:

- *Mismatched expectations and communication problems*
- *Supervisor performance issues (e.g., availability to meet, timeliness of feedback, depth of feedback)*
- *Candidate performance issues (including failure to complete work within timeframes)*
- *Conflicts of interest and issues around research integrity (e.g., appropriation of work)*
- *Bullying and other inappropriate behaviours*

You indicated when registering your interest to participate in an interview that you'd experienced these sorts of situations while you've been a HDR candidate.

1. If you're comfortable, can you explain how the situation/s arose and how it developed?

2. Who was involved? Just you or all of the supervisory team?
3. Were there any factors that impacted the situation? (e.g., differences in age / gender / cultural background / language barriers / HDR was an international student)
4. How did you attempt to manage the situation?

Reporting or seeking assistance

Thinking now about how the issue was managed...

1. Did you seek support or report the situation to anyone?
2. If not, why not?
3. Who was involved? (e.g., another supervisor / panel member / another HDR / postgrad coordinator etc)
4. If you sought assistance, were you provided with the supports that you needed?
5. If you reported the situation, how was the issue escalated / managed? By whom?
6. In your view, was the situation satisfactorily resolved?
7. What has been the longer-term impact of this situation on you, your academic standing?

Training

Thinking now about what sort of training or information you've been provided to prepare you for supervising HDR candidates...

1. Has your current university provided you with information or training on acceptable and respectful behaviours for staff and students, or managing relationship issues commonly arising with HDR candidates?
2. Who offered the information and/or training?
3. When was the last occasion when you attended such training or read this information?
4. Do you have any suggestions about improving training around relationship issues commonly arising with HDR candidates?

General questions (time allowing)

- Are you aware of other HDR supervisors experiencing similar situations?
- Do you have any suggestions as to how supervisory relationships could be better managed?

8. APPENDIX C – Complete participant demographic characteristics

This section contains information about the 1,848 participants who submitted their surveys. It is separated into three subsections – 1) demographic information that is applicable to all participants, 2) demographic information unique to Candidates, and 3) demographic information unique to Supervisors.

8.1 Information of all participants

Of the 1,848 participants who submitted their surveys, almost two-thirds were Candidates (65.3%) and just over a third were Supervisors (34.7%).

8.1.1 Age

Of the 1,848 participants, 80 (40 Candidates and 40 Supervisors, 4.3%) either opted 'prefer not to answer' the question or provided an unclear response when providing information about their age.

The table below show the mean age, median age, and age range of the Candidates and Supervisors.

Table 28. Age information (Candidates and Supervisors)

	Candidates (n=1,167)*	Supervisors (n=601)*
Mean age	35.1	51.1
Median age	32.0	51.0
Age range	18 – 78	28 – 90

*The mean age, median age, and age range are based on the total numbers of responses provided by Candidates and Supervisors excluding 'prefer not to answer' and unclear responses.

The figure below shows the age distribution of participants who provided clear information about their age. The figure also includes participants who opted to 'prefer not to answer' the question or provided an unclear response to provide the accurate percentages in different age groups across all participants who submitted their surveys. Almost three-quarters (876, 72.6%) of Candidates were in the younger age groups (i.e., <29, 30-39), and over three-quarters (505, 78.8%) of Supervisors were in the older age groups (i.e., from 40-49 to >90).

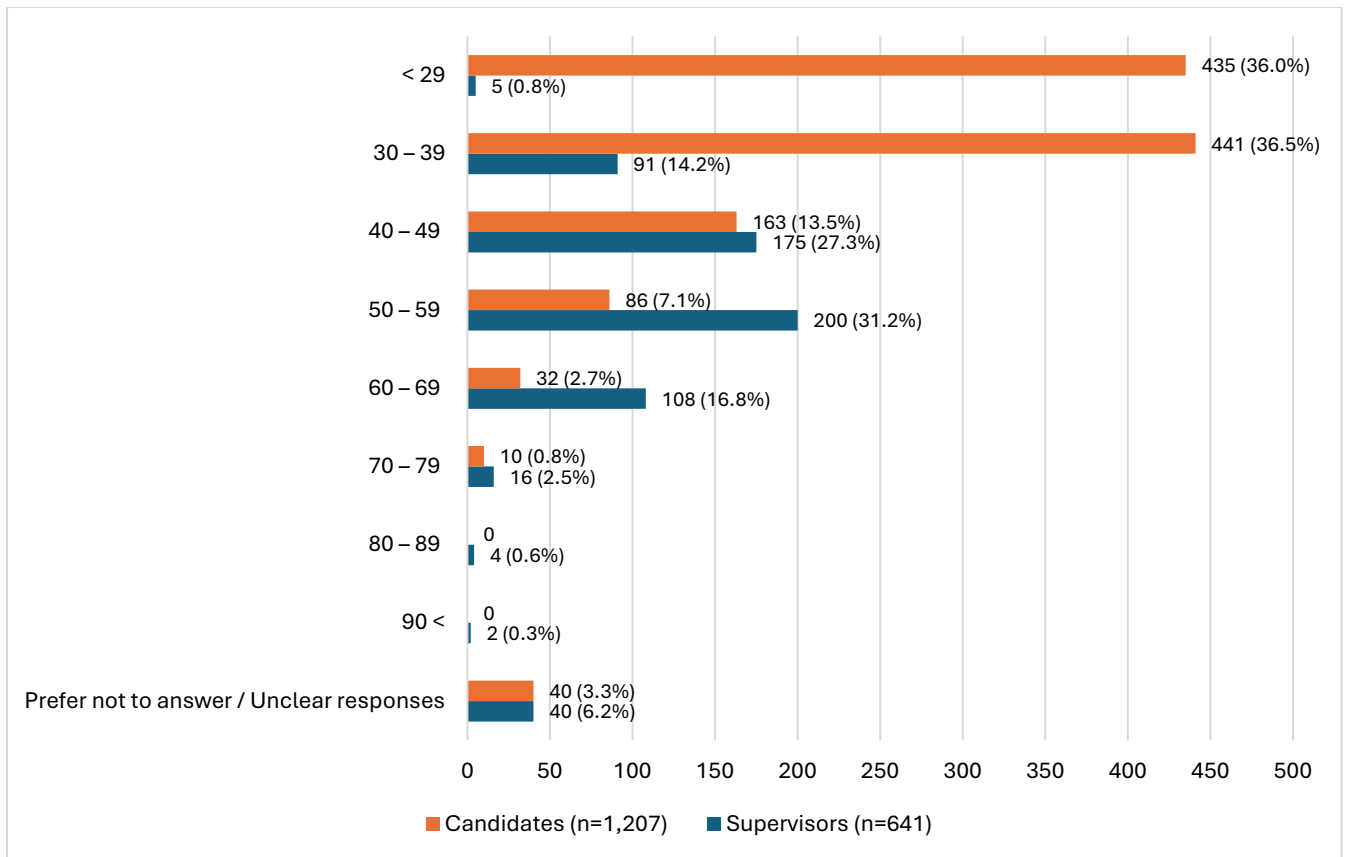


Figure 16. Age distribution (Candidates and Supervisors)

8.1.2 Birthplace location

Participants were asked to provide information about their country of birth. If they were not born in Australia, they were asked to specify their country of birth. Of the participants who provided information about their country of birth, 943 (51.0%) identified as being born in Australia, 853 (46.2%) identified as being born overseas, with 52 (2.8%) participants opted to ‘prefer not to answer’. The figure below shows the above distribution between Candidates and Supervisors.

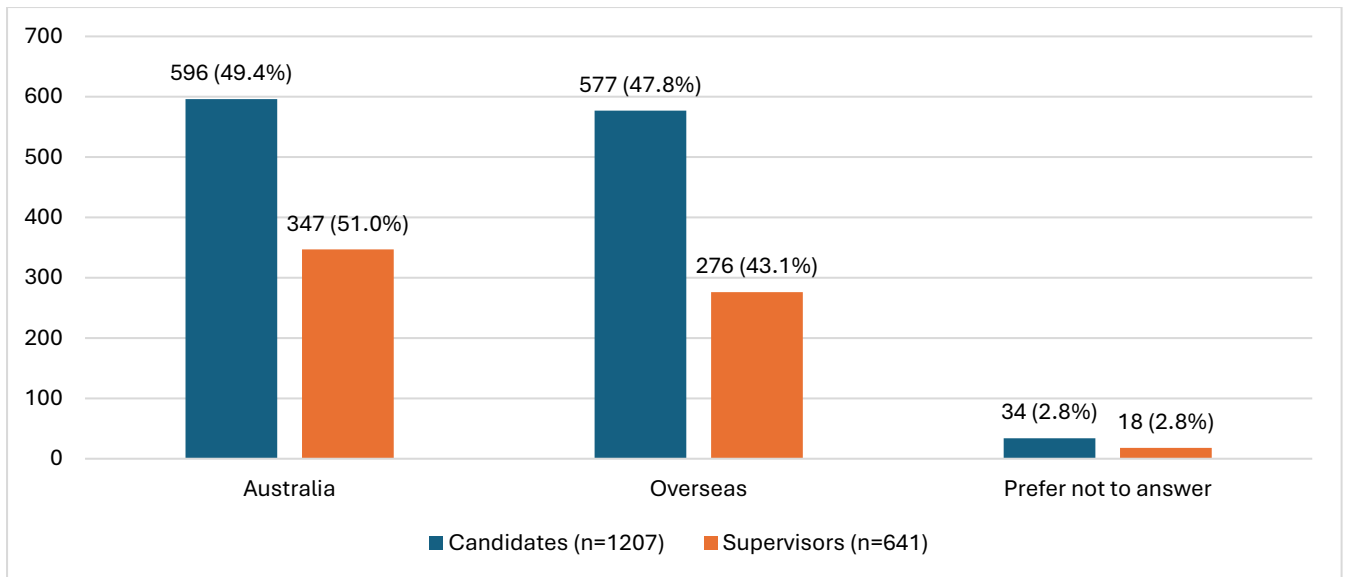


Figure 17. Birthplace distribution (Candidates and Supervisors)

Candidates and Supervisors who identified as being born overseas were asked to provide the name of the country.

As the numbers for some countries identified by the participants are very small, the countries were categorised using the Standard Australian Classification of Countries¹ produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Employing the broad categories used by the ABS enabled an analysis of participants' world region of birth whilst ensuring confidentiality.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/standard-australian-classification-countries-sacc/latest-release>

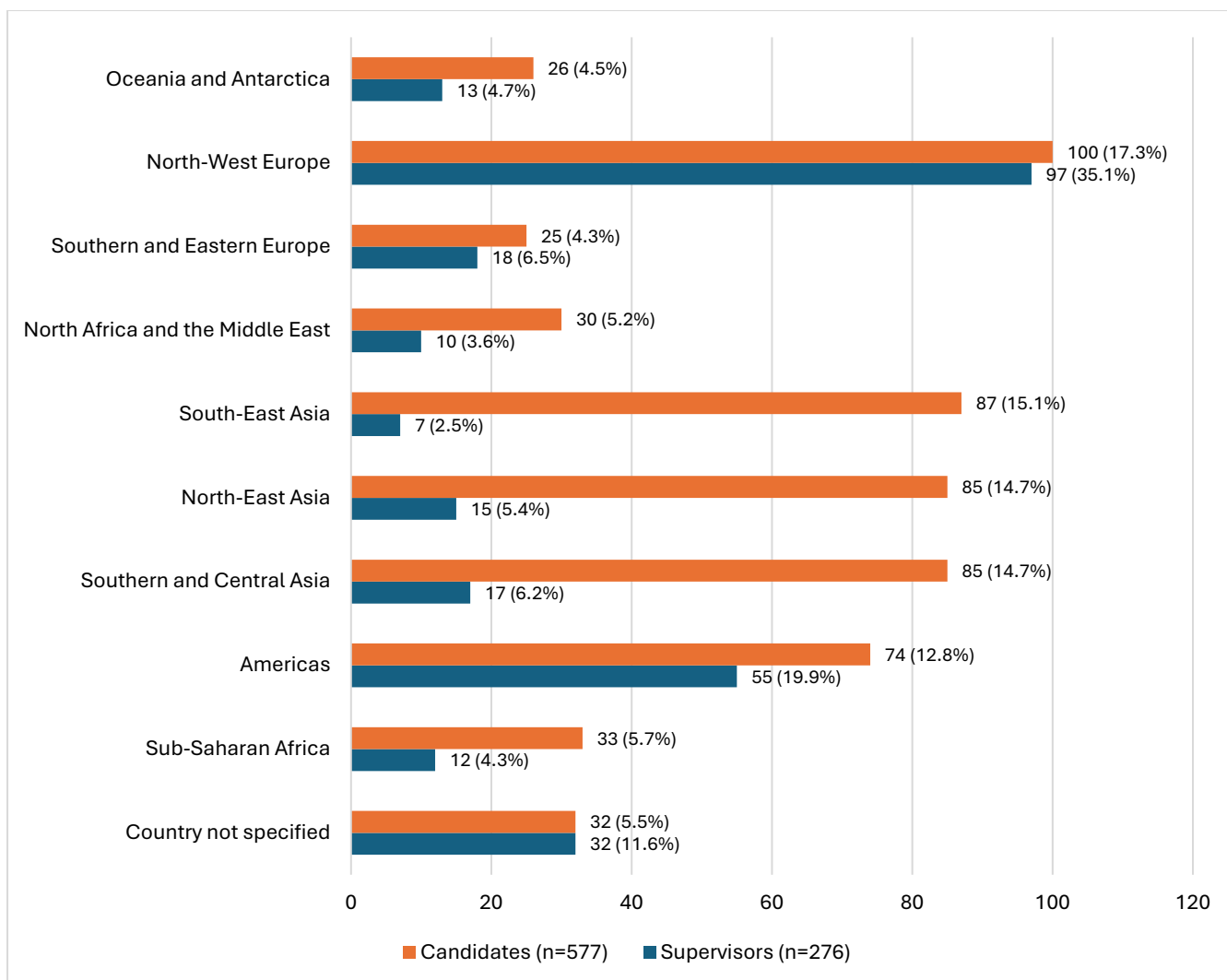


Figure 18. World region of birthplace locations for overseas-born participants

8.1.3 Cultural information

Cultural information was collected from participants. They were asked about whether they are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin or descent, and how they would describe their cultural background.

8.1.3.1 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin or descent

The representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples is very small in the participant group.

Almost all participants (1807, 97.8%) indicated that they are not of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin or descent. Only 20 participants (14 Candidates, 6 Supervisors, 1.1%) identified that they are Australian Aboriginal, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Twenty-one participants (1.1%) opted to 'prefer not to answer'.

Of the 14 Candidates (1.2%) who identified as of Australian Aboriginal (n=13), or Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (n=1) origin or descent, four of them did not describe their cultural background as including Indigenous Australian. Six Supervisors (0.9%) identified as of Australian Aboriginal (n=5), or Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

(n=1), origin or descent. One of them did not describe their cultural background as including Indigenous Australian.

8.1.3.2 Cultural background

Participants provided information about their cultural backgrounds. Informed by the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG)² produced by ABS, participants' cultural background information is categorised into broad categories to enhance anonymity. Participants were able to select multiple cultural backgrounds from the list provided in the surveys. When some participants provided specific cultural background details, the information was coded into the available categories.

Table 29. Cultural background (Candidates and Supervisors)

	Candidates*	Supervisors*
Indigenous Australian	10 (0.8%)	5 (0.8%)
Australian (excluding Indigenous Australian)	471 (39.0%)	298 (46.5%)
New Zealander and Pacific Islander	42 (3.5%)	15 (2.3%)
Anglo-European	265 (22.0%)	168 (26.2%)
Other European (excluding Anglo-European)	144 (11.9%)	98 (15.3%)
European (not specified)	4 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)
Asian	354 (29.3%)	63 (9.8%)
Americas	55 (4.6%)	34 (5.3%)
African or Middle Eastern	73 (6.0%)	21 (3.3%)
Multiple Cultural Backgrounds (non-specified)	-	4 (0.6%)
Unsure	6 (0.5%)	1 (0.2%)
Prefer not to answer	19 (1.6%)	23 (3.6%)

* Candidates and Supervisors were able to indicate more than one cultural background.

8.1.4 Language information

Information provided by the 1,848 participants indicate that 537 (29.1%) speak a first language other than English. More specifically, a third of Candidates (408, 33.8%) and one in five Supervisors (129, 20.1%) speak a first language other than English.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019). Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG). Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-standard-classification-cultural-and-ethnic-groups-ascceg/latest-release>

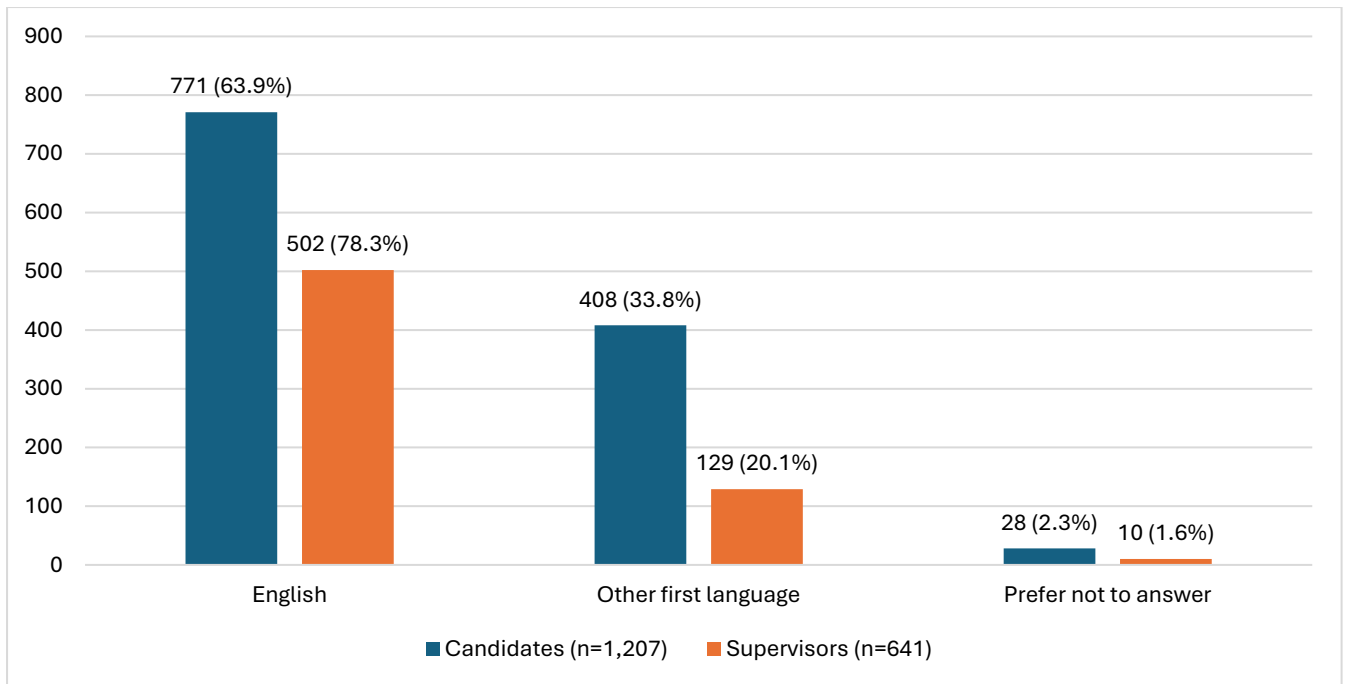


Figure 19. Distribution of first language spoken (Candidates and Supervisors)

Participants whose first language is not English provided information about their first language. As the numbers for many languages identified by the participants were very small, the languages were categorised using the Language used at home (LANP)³ classification produced by the ABS. Employing the broad categories used by the ABS enabled an analysis of participants' first languages whilst ensuring confidentiality.

Close to three-quarters of the 1,848 participants (1,331, 72.0%) indicated that their first language is one of the Northern European languages, which English is included in this category in accordance with the LANP classification. Responses from Candidates indicated that, following the Northern European languages group, the next largest language group was languages from Southwest and Central, Southern, Southeast, and Eastern Asia (290, 24.0%). The largest language group for Supervisors was Southern European and Eastern European languages (47, 7.3%).

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Language used at home (LANP). Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/cultural-diversity/language-used-home-lanp>

Table 30. Distribution of first languages across regions (Candidates and Supervisors)

	Candidates	Supervisors
Northern European languages*	801 (66.4%)	530 (82.7%)
Southern European languages	55 (4.6%)	37 (5.8%)
Eastern European languages	14 (1.2%)	10 (1.6%)
Eastern Asian languages	96 (8.0%)	15 (2.3%)
Southern Asian languages	84 (7.0%)	12 (1.9%)
Southeast Asian languages	70 (5.8%)	5 (0.8%)
Southwest and Central Asian languages	40 (3.3%)	9 (1.4%)
Australian Indigenous languages	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.3%)
Other languages	12 (1.0%)	2 (0.3)
Prefer not to answer	28 (2.3%)	12 (1.9%)
Not specified	6 (0.5%)	7 (1.1%)

* English is classified as a Northern European language in the Language used at home (LANP) classification.

8.1.5 Gender identity

The figure and table in this section show 1) the number of Candidates and Supervisors who provided information on their gender identities, and 2) gender identity information across the participating universities.

Of the 1,848 participants (Candidates and Supervisors) who submitted their surveys, most (1,132, 61.3%) identified as ‘woman or female’, and more than one in three participants (650, 35.2%) identified as ‘man or male’. Whilst some participants identified as non-binary (34, 1.8%), transgender male (4, 0.2%) or offered a unique description of their gender identity (3, 0.1%), the numbers were small. A small number of participants (25, 1.4%) opted ‘prefer not to answer’ the question.

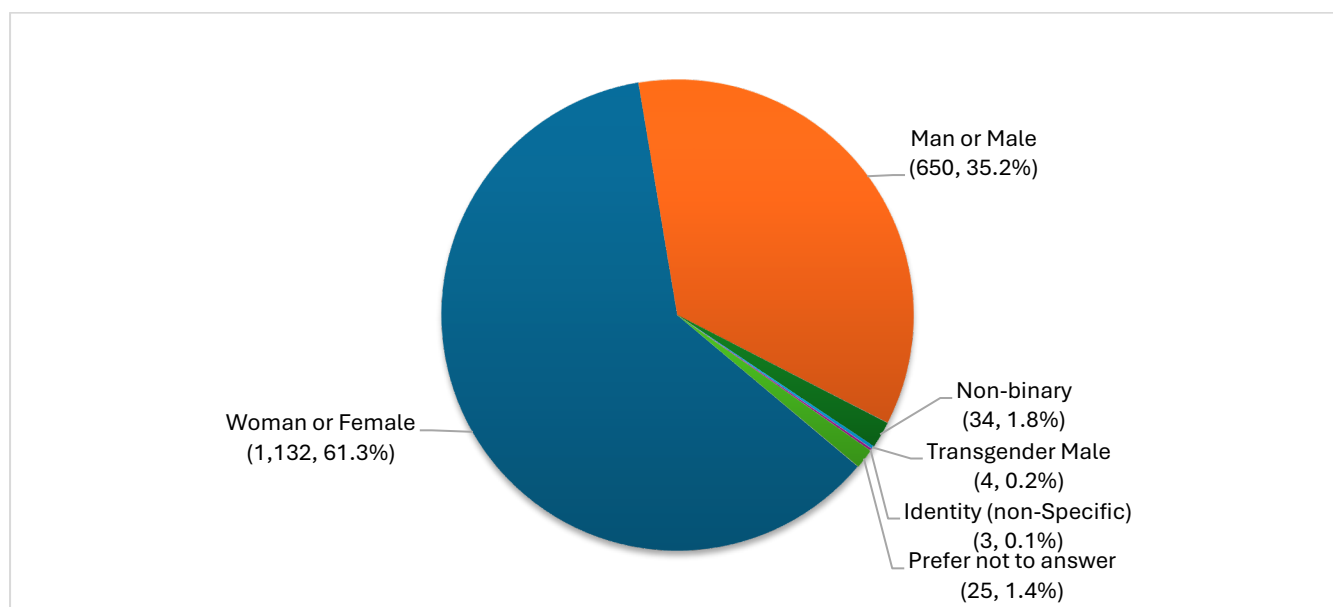


Figure 20. Gender identities (all participants)

The figure below shows the gender identities indicated by Candidates and Supervisors separately.

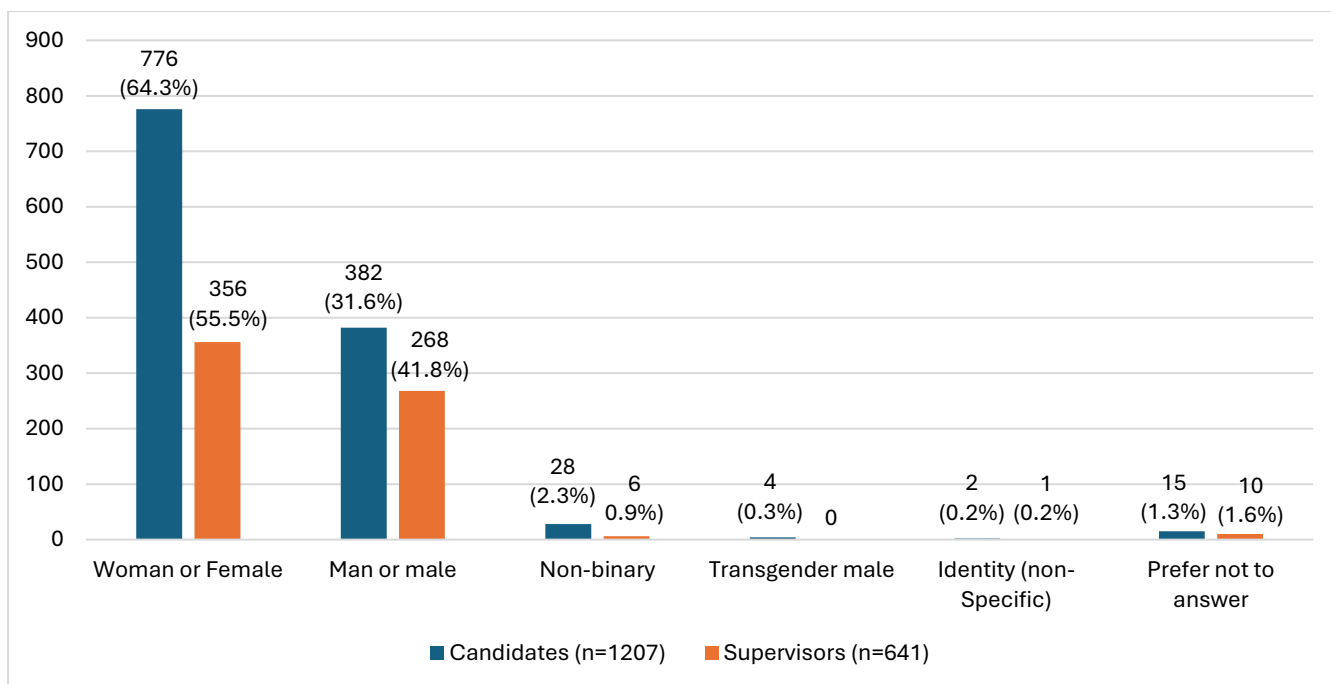


Figure 21: Gender identities (Candidates and Supervisors)

The table below presents gender identity information (numbers and percentages) provided by the participants across the 10 universities, separated by whether they are Candidates or Supervisors.

Table 31: Gender identity by universities (Candidates and Supervisors)

		Woman or Female	Man or Male	Non-binary	Trans-gender Male	Identity (non-Specific)	Prefer not to answer
ANU	Cand. (n=161)	94 (58.4%)	58 (36.0%)	6 (3.7%)	-	-	3 (1.9%)
	Super. (n=69)	29 (42.0%)	35 (50.7%)	2 (2.9%)	-	-	3 (4.4%)
JCU	Cand. (n=41)	30 (73.2%)	10 (24.4%)	1 (2.4%)	-	-	-
	Super. (n=11)	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%)	-	-	-	-
RMIT	Cand. (n=65)	39 (60.0%)	24 (36.9%)	2 (3.1%)	-	-	-
	Super. (n=33)	19 (57.6%)	14 (42.4%)	-	-	-	-
Swinburne	Cand. (n=49)	29 (59.2%)	18 (36.8%)	1 (2.0%)	-	-	1 (2.0%)
	Super. (n=55)	25 (45.5%)	28 (50.9%)	-	-	-	2 (3.6%)
Adelaide	Cand. (n=83)	57 (68.7%)	22 (26.5%)	2 (2.4%)	2 (2.4%)	-	-
	Super. (n=42)	24 (57.1%)	18 (42.9%)	-	-	-	-
UoM	Cand. (n=267)	186 (69.7%)	75 (28.1%)	4 (1.5%)	-	-	2 (0.7%)
	Super. (n=129)	77 (59.7%)	52 (40.3%)	-	-	-	-
UNSW	Cand. (n=232)	136 (58.6%)	83 (35.7%)	6 (2.6%)	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)	3 (1.3%)
	Super. (n=112)	59 (52.7%)	50 (44.6%)	1 (0.9%)	-	-	2 (1.8%)
USyd	Cand. (n=79)	57 (72.2%)	18 (22.8%)	2 (2.5%)	-	-	2 (2.5%)
	Super. (n=60)	38 (63.4%)	20 (33.3%)	2 (3.3%)	-	-	-
UTas	Cand. (n=88)	61 (69.3%)	24 (27.3%)	3 (3.4%)	-	-	-
	Super. (n=50)	30 (60%)	19 (38.0%)	-	-	-	1 (2.0%)
UWA	Cand. (n=142)	87 (61.3%)	50 (35.2%)	1 (0.7%)	-	-	4 (2.8%)

	Super. (n=80)	45 (56.2%)	31 (38.7%)	1 (1.3%)	-	1 (1.3%)	2 (2.5%)
	Cand. (n=1,207)	776 (64.3%)	382 (31.6%)	28 (2.3%)	4 (0.3%)	2 (0.2%)	15 (1.3%)
	Super. (n=641)	356 (55.5%)	268 (41.8%)	6 (0.9%)	0	1 (0.2%)	10 (1.6%)
Total	n=1,848	1132 (61.3%)	650 (35.2%)	34 (1.8%)	4 (0.2%)	3 (0.1%)	25 (1.4%)

8.1.6 Sexual identities

The figures and table in this section show 1) the number of Candidates and Supervisors who provided information on their sexual identities, and 2) sexual identity information across the participating universities.

Of the 1,848 participants (Candidates and Supervisors) who submitted their surveys, three-quarters (1,403, 75.9%) of them identified as heterosexual, and about one in five participants (341, 18.5%) identified as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, polysexual, asexual. About one in 20 participants (104, 5.6%) either opted 'prefer not to answer' the question or provided an unclear response.

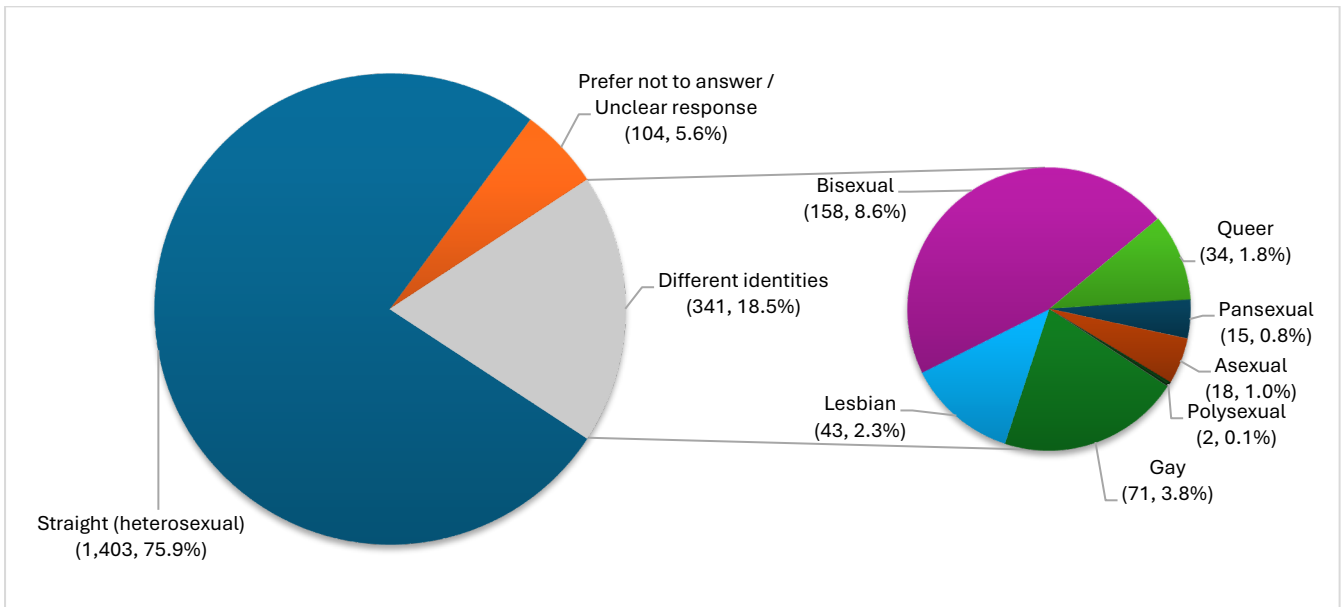


Figure 22. Sexual identities (Candidates and Supervisors)

The figure below shows the self-identified sexual identity numbers as provided by Candidates and Supervisors separately.

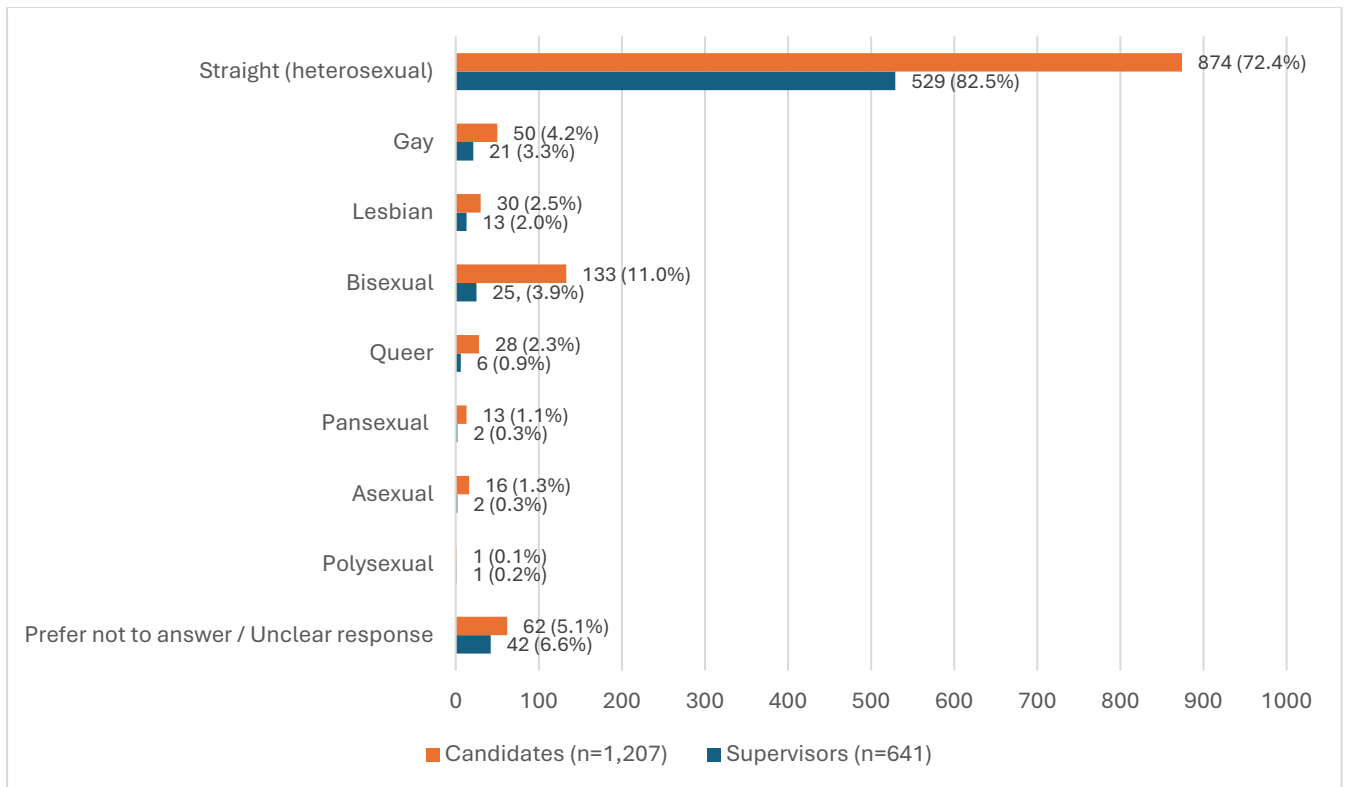


Figure 23. Sexual identities (Candidates and Supervisors)

The table below presents sexual identity information (numbers and percentages) provided by the participants across the 10 universities, separated by whether they are Candidates or Supervisors.

Table 32. Sexual identity by universities

		Straight (heterosexual)	Gay	Lesbian	Bi-sexual	Queer	Pan-sexual	Asexual	Poly-sexual	Prefer not to answer / Unclear response
ANU	Cand. (n=161)	115 (71.4%)	3 (1.9%)	3 (1.9%)	22 (13.7%)	4 (2.5%)	1 (0.6%)	3 (1.9%)	-	10 (6.2%)
	Super. (n=69)	54 (78.3%)	1 (1.4%)	-	4 (5.8%)	2 (2.9%)	-	-	-	8 (11.6%)
JCU	Cand. (n=41)	30 (73.2%)	2 (4.9%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.9%)	-	1 (2.4%)	-	4 (9.8%)
	Super. (n=11)	10 (90.9%)	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	1 (9.1%)
RMIT	Cand. (n=65)	37 (56.9%)	5 (7.7%)	2 (3.1%)	8 (12.3%)	3 (4.6%)	2 (3.1%)	-	-	8 (12.3%)
	Super. (n=33)	28 (84.8%)	1 (3.0%)	1 (3.0%)	1 (3.0%)	1 (3.0%)	1 (3.0%)	-	-	-
Swinburne	Cand. (n=49)	39 (79.6%)	3 (6.1%)	-	4 (8.2%)	-	2 (4.1%)	-	-	1 (2.0%)
	Super. (n=55)	44 (80.0%)	1 (1.8%)	2 (3.6%)	4 (7.3%)	-	-0	-	-	4 (7.3%)

Adelaide	Cand. (n=83)	55 (66.3%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	14 (16.9%)	-	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.6%)	-	5 (6.0%)
	Super. (n=42)	37 (88.1%)	1 (2.4%)	-	2 (4.8%)	-	-	-	-	2 (4.8%)
UoM	Cand. (n=267)	196 (73.4%)	10 (3.7%)	7 (2.6%)	28 (10.5%)	6 (2.2%)	3 (1.1%)	3 (1.1%)	-	14 (5.2%)
	Super. (n=129)	106 (82.2%)	5 (3.9%)	3 (2.3%)	4 (3.1%)	-	1 (0.8%)	-	-	10 (7.8%)
UNSW	Cand. (n=232)	163 (70.3%)	13 (5.6%)	7 (3.0%)	25 (10.8%)	9 (3.9%)	3 (1.3%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	10 (4.3%)
	Super. (n=112)	92 (82.1%)	5 (4.5%)	4 (3.6%)	2 (1.8%)	3 (2.7%)	-	-	-	6 (5.4%)
USyd	Cand. (n=79)	58 (73.4%)	5 (6.3%)	1 (1.3%)	9 (11.4%)	-	1 (1.3%)	3 (3.8%)	-	2 (2.5%)
	Super. (n=60)	51 (85.0%)	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (5.0%)	-	-	-	-	2 (3.3%)
UTas	Cand. (n=88)	68 (77.3%)	3 (3.4%)	2 (2.3%)	10 (11.4%)	2 (2.3%)	-	1 (1.1%)	-	2 (2.3%)
	Super. (n=50)	44 (88.0%)	1 (2.0%)	-	-	-	-	1 (2.0%)	-	4 (8.0%)
UWA	Cand. (n=142)	113 (79.6%)	4 (2.8%)	4 (2.8%)	12 (8.5%)	2 (1.4%)	-	1 (0.7%)	-	6 (4.2%)
	Super. (n=80)	63 (78.8%)	4 (5.0%)	1 (1.3%)	5 (6.3%)	-	-	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.3%)	5 (6.3%)
	Total Cand. (n=1,207)	874 (72.4%)	50 (4.2%)	30 (2.5%)	133 (11.0%)	28 (2.3%)	13 (1.1%)	16 (1.3%)	1 (0.1%)	62 (5.1%)
	Total Super. (n=641)	529 (82.5%)	21 (3.3%)	13 (2.0%)	25 (3.9%)	6 (0.9%)	2 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)	1 (0.2%)	42 (6.6%)
	Total (n=1,848)	1,403 (76.0%)	71 (3.8%)	43 (2.3%)	158 (8.6%)	34 (1.8%)	15 (0.8%)	18 (1.0%)	2 (0.1%)	104 (5.6%)

8.2 Candidates Specific Information

Candidates provided a wide range of information about their HDR programs, enrolment details, and supervision arrangements.

Some general information about the 1,207 Candidates includes:

- Three-quarters of Candidates were enrolled full-time (909, 75.3%), just under a quarter were enrolled part-time (280, 23.2%), and a small group of Candidates were on program leave (18, 1.5%).
- Over four out of five Candidates (976, 80.9%) were receiving a scholarship to complete their HDR program.
- Just under half of the Candidates (583, 48.3%) had previously studied at the university where they are completing their HDR program
- The largest group of Candidates who submitted their surveys are those who had only completed one year of their program (422, 35.0%). The next largest group is Candidates who have completed two years (283, 23.4%), then those who have completed three years (251, 20.8%), and then those who completed four years (139, 11.5%). The smallest group was those who have completed five or more years of their program (112, 9.3%).

- Over half of the Candidates were expecting to complete their HDR program in 2024 and 2025 (642, 53.2%). The remaining Candidates were expecting to do so after 2025 (565, 46.8%).
- Over half of the Candidates (685, 56.7%) indicated that they usually work on campus to complete their HDR studies (e.g., in an office, laboratory, or studio). About four in 10 (474, 39.3%) Candidates were not on campus to complete their studies (e.g., working from home, or working at another organisation). The remaining Candidates (48, 4.0%) indicated flexibility in where they work such as working in a hybrid fashion (i.e., work on campus and at home).
- In the usual location or physical space where they work to complete their HDR program, about two-thirds (760, 63.0%) work with other Candidates and/or university staff.
- Almost half of the Candidates (579, 48.0%) were employed by the university. Of the 579 Candidates who are employed, most are employed on a casual basis (457, 78.9%), and almost half (287, 49.6%) were employed on research projects or courses/subject their HDR supervisors are conducting.
- Over one in five Candidates (265, 22.0%) indicated that they live with a disability or chronic illness, which can affect their candidature.

Some further detailed information about the Candidates is presented below.

8.2.1 Candidates – Residential status

The ratio of domestic to international Candidates in the participant group is 2 to 1. Of the 1,207 Candidates who submitted their surveys, 813 (67.4%) identified as domestic Candidates and 394 (32.6%) as international Candidates. The figure below shows the numbers of domestic and international Candidates by universities.

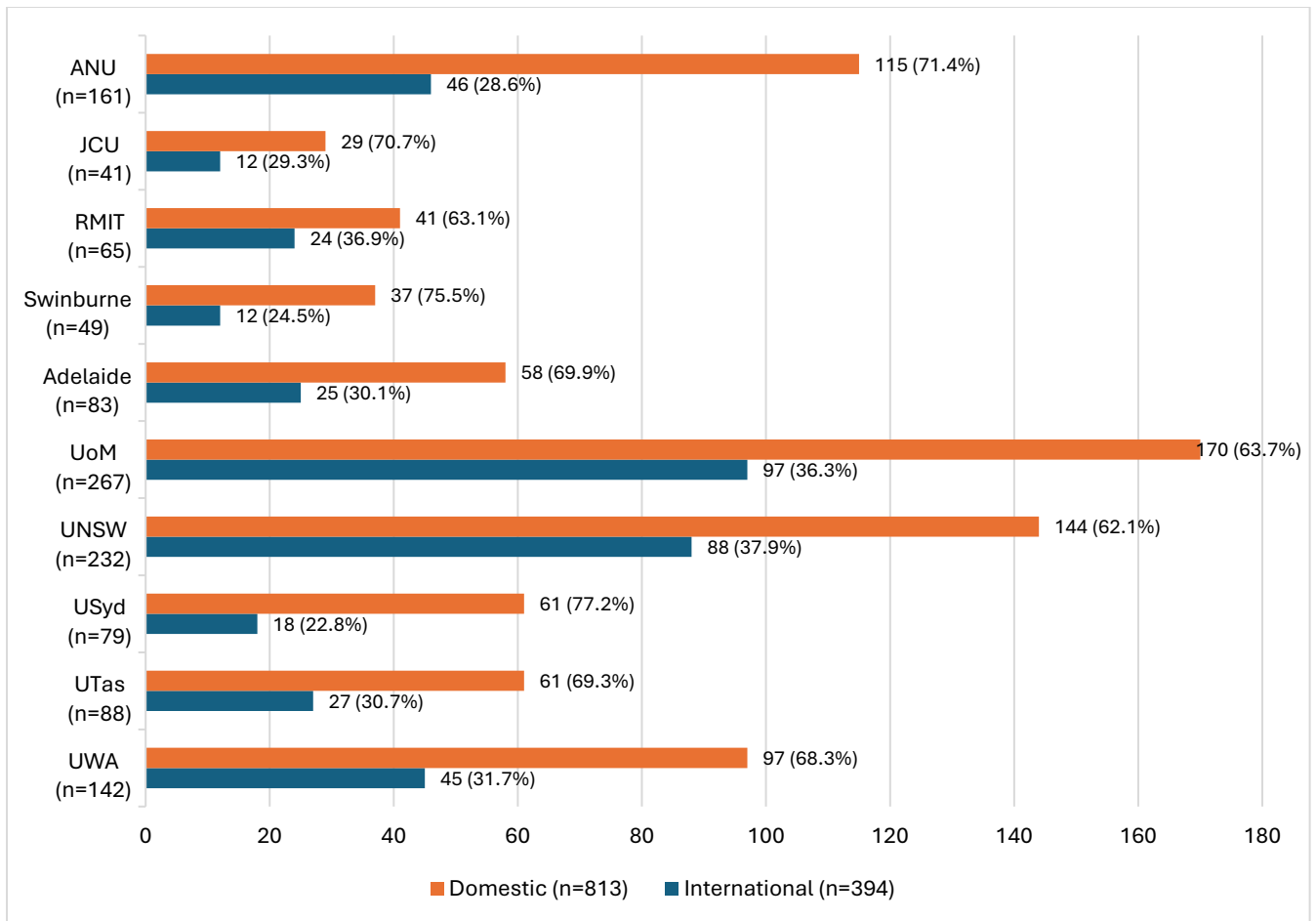


Figure 24. Numbers of domestic and international candidates by universities

8.2.2 Program information – Candidates

This section details the information Candidates provided pertaining to their HDR programs – for example, the degree program in which they are enrolled, years completed, and information about their supervision.

8.2.2.1 Degree program - Candidates

Candidates enrolled in a PhD program formed the largest group in the Candidates cohort.

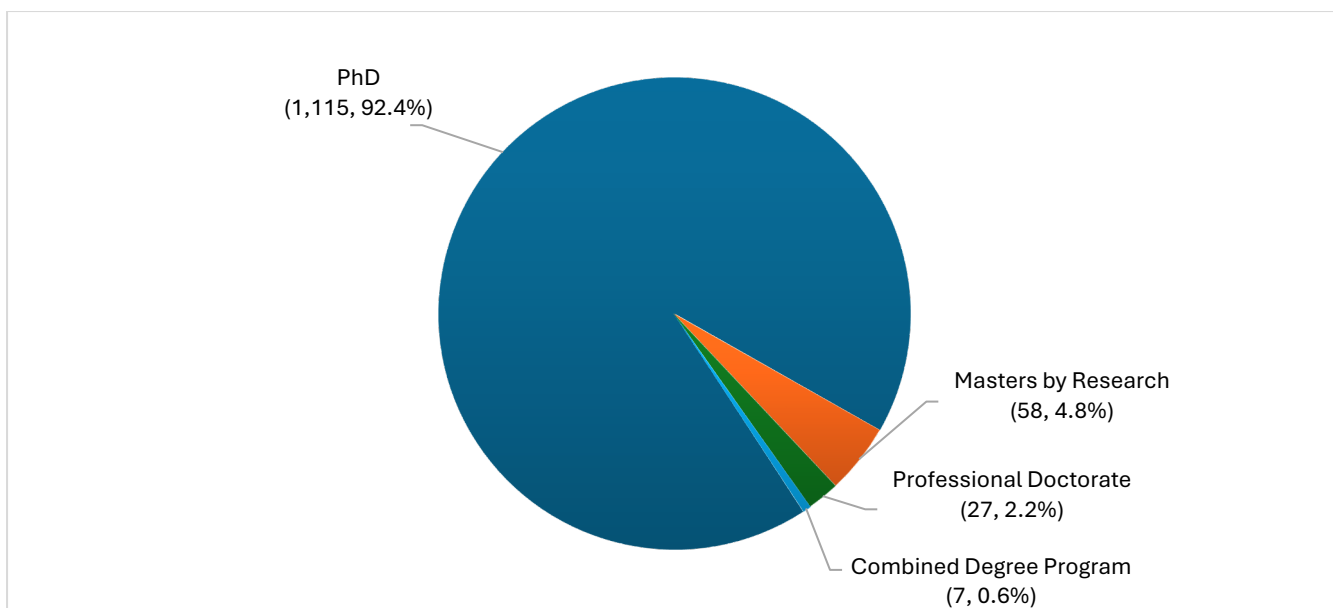


Figure 25. Distribution of HDR program enrolment

The table below shows the distribution of HDR programs in which domestic and international Candidates are enrolled by universities.

Table 33. Distribution of HDR programs by universities

		Masters by Research	PhD	Professional Doctorate	Combined Degree Program
ANU (n=161)	Domestic (n=115)	5 (4.4%)	110 (95.6%)	-	-
	International (n=46)	1 (2.2%)	45 (97.8%)	-	-
JCU (n=41)	Domestic (n=29)	2 (6.9%)	27 (93.1%)	-	-
	International (n=12)	2 (16.7%)	10 (83.3%)	-	-
RMIT (n=65)	Domestic (n=41)	2 (4.9%)	38 (92.7%)	1 (2.4%)	-
	International (n=24)	-	24 (100%)	-	-
Swinburne (n=49)	Domestic (n=37)	-	30 (81.1%)	5 (13.5%)	2 (5.4%)
	International (n=12)	1 (8.3%)	11 (91.7%)	-	-
Adelaide (n=83)	Domestic (n=58)	4 (6.9%)	54 (93.1%)	-	-
	International (n=25)	3 (12.0%)	22 (88.0%)	-	-
UoM (n=267)	Domestic (n=170)	10 (5.9%)	153 (90.0%)	7 (4.1%)	-
	International (n=97)	3 (3.1%)	92 (94.8%)	2 (2.1%)	-
UNSW (n=232)	Domestic (n=144)	6 (4.2%)	129 (89.6%)	8 (5.5%)	1 (0.7%)
	International (n=88)	1 (1.1%)	87 (98.9%)	-	-
USyd (n=79)	Domestic (n=61)	5 (8.2%)	55 (90.2%)	1 (1.6%)	-
	International (n=18)	1 (5.6%)	17 (94.4%)	-	-
UTas (n=88)	Domestic (n=61)	2 (3.3%)	59 (96.7%)	-	-
	International (n=27)	1 (3.7%)	26 (96.3%)	-	-
UWA (n=142)	Domestic (n=97)	8 (8.3%)	82 (84.5%)	3 (3.1%)	4 (4.1%)
	International (n=45)	1 (2.2%)	44 (97.8%)	-	-
Total	Domestic (n=813)	44 (5.4%)	737 (90.7%)	25 (3.1%)	7 (0.9%)

	International (n=394)	14 (3.6%)	378 (95.9%)	2 (0.5%)	-
	n=1,207	58 (4.8%)	1,115 (92.4%)	27 (2.2%)	7 (0.6%)

With regards to the primary academic discipline/field in which the 1,207 Candidates were enrolled for their HDR program, 'Humanities, culture and social sciences' had the most Candidates (227, 18.8%), followed by 'Science and mathematics' (204, 16.9%) and 'Medicine' (154, 12.8%). No Candidates from 'Tourism, hospitality, personal services, sport and recreation' submitted a survey. The table below shows the distribution of the primary academic discipline/field in which the Candidates were enrolled by universities.

Table 34. Distribution of primary academic discipline/field by universities

	ANU	JCU	RMIT	Swinburne	Adelaide	UoM	UNSW	USyd	UTas	UWA	Total
Agriculture and environmental studies	7	4	3	-	3	18	5	2	15	7	64 (5.3%)
Architecture and built environment	-	-	4	4	3	15	8	1	2	-	37 (3.1%)
Business and management	8	4	5	5	4	1	7	1	6	9	50 (4.1%)
Communications	1	-	6	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	11 (0.9%)
Computing and information systems	4	1	3	4	2	11	3	1	3	1	33 (2.7%)
Creative arts	4	2	7	1	4	8	2	2	4	3	37 (3.1%)
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2 (0.2%)
Engineering	7	1	7	5	7	15	38	2	13	2	97 (8.0%)
Health services and support	12	3	1	3	4	15	7	9	9	4	67 (5.6%)
Humanities, culture and social sciences	55	5	16	4	16	50	31	19	15	16	227 (18.8%)
Law and paralegal studies	7	-	1	-	1	4	7	-	4	-	24 (2.0%)
Medicine	3	4	5	-	13	30	56	20	9	14	154 (12.8%)
Nursing	-	-	-	-	2	3	-	3	-	2	10 (0.8%)
Pharmacy	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	4	1	9 (0.7%)
Psychology	7	3	3	18	3	21	14	3	17	6	95 (7.9%)
Rehabilitation	-	-	-	-	-	5	2	3	1	-	11 (0.9%)
Science and mathematics	46	7	3	4	16	40	37	4	27	20	204 (16.9%)

Social work	-	4	-	-	-	4	1	1	5	1	16 (1.3%)
Teacher education	-	3	-	1	1	12	13	5	7	2	44 (3.6%)
Tourism, hospitality, personal services, sport and recreation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Veterinary science	-	-	-	-	3	12	-	-	-	-	15 (1.2%)

8.2.3 Change in supervisors

Most Candidates indicated that they had stable supervisory arrangements with no changes to their Supervisors (826, 68.4%). Just under a third of Candidates (381, 31.6%) had at least one of their Supervisors change since commencing their HDR program. When changes occurred, about three in 10 Candidates indicated that the change involved their Primary or Principal supervisor.

More than half of the 381 Candidates who had any of their Supervisors change indicated that it was their Supervisors who initiated the change (208, 54.6%). Over a quarter indicated that the Candidate themselves had initiated the change (108, 28.3%), and a small number indicated that it was a mutual decision between them and their Supervisors (18, 4.7%). Other Candidates indicated that the change was initiated by their university (24, 6.3%), different people other than their Supervisors who are involved in their HDR program (18, 4.7%), and other people that the Candidates did not make clear (5, 1.3%).

The reasons indicated by Candidates for changes to their Supervisors are shown in the table below.

Table 35. Reasons for supervisor change

	n=381*
Supervisor(s) left the university (e.g., change jobs, retired)	176 (46.2%)
Supervisory performance issues	81 (21.3%)
Change in direction of my higher degree research	76 (19.9%)
Communication issues	67 (17.6%)
Mismatched expectations	52 (13.6%)
Expansion of supervisory team	43 (11.3%)
Supervisor behaviour issues	25 (6.6%)
Supervisor(s) was unwell	21 (5.5%)
Supervisor took leave	14 (3.7%)
Supervisor time constraints	10 (2.6%)
University policy / change required by university	7 (1.8%)
Change of roles among supervisors	6 (1.6%)
Supervisor could no longer commit to the project	5 (1.3%)
Power imbalance or conflict of interest	5 (1.3%)
COVID-19 pandemic	1 (0.3%)

* Candidates were able to indicate more than one reason.

Whilst some Candidates indicated that changes to their Supervisors did not affect their HDR program (40, 10.5%), both positive and negative effects resulting from changes were indicated by other Candidates, and are shown in the table below.

Table 36. Effects of supervisor change

	n=381*
I was able to continue with my HDR program	211 (55.4%)
It improved my supervision experience	147 (38.6%)
It helped with my higher degree research	121 (31.8%)
I was able to work with someone with greater expertise	117 (30.7%)
It delayed my HDR progression	105 (27.6%)
It negatively affected my higher degree research	63 (16.5%)
It diminished the quality of my supervision experience	59 (15.5%)
I feel less confident about my higher degree research	54 (14.2%)
It affected my physical or mental health	11 (2.9%)
I was unable to get appropriate support tor advice for my research	8 (2.1%)
I was able to work with someone more suitable	4 (1.0%)
The issues raised were not addressed	4 (1.0%)
I had to change programs/faculties/universities	2 (0.5%)
Created more work for the Candidates and remaining Supervisor(s)	1 (0.3%)

* Candidates were able to indicate more than one effect.

8.2.4 Candidates training – Acceptable and respectful behaviours

Almost three-quarters of Candidates (873, 72.3%) indicated that their university had provided information or training on acceptable and respectful behaviours for its staff and students. About one in five (229, 19.0%) were unsure if their university had provided information or training, and about one in 12 (104, 8.6%) indicated the contrary.

On receiving the information or being offered the training on acceptable and respectful behaviours, two-thirds of Candidates (801, 66.4%) either read the information or attended the training. The other third of Candidates included those who either had not read the information or attended the training (32, 2.7%), were unsure (39, 3.2%), or did not provide any information (334, 27.7%).

8.3 Supervisors Specific Information

This section presents some information provided by the Supervisors who submitted their surveys.

Some general information about the 641 Supervisors includes:

- Over a third of Supervisors had been employed at their university for 16 or more years (218, 34%). The next largest group were Supervisors who have been employed for between six to 10 years (152, 23.7%), followed by those employed for between 11 and 15 years (131, 20.4%), and then those employed for between one and five years (129, 20.1%).

- About three-quarters of the Supervisors were employed on a permanent basis (479, 74.7%), and just under a quarter on a fixed-term contract basis (148, 23.1%). A small number of Supervisors were employed on a casual basis (14, 2.2%).
- The Supervisor cohort is comprised of mainly senior and experienced academics with 82.4% being 'Level E' academics (218, 34.0%), 'Level D' academics (159, 24.8%), and 'Level C' academics (151, 23.6%). The remaining 17.6% of Supervisors consisted of 'Level B' academics (84, 13.1%), and 'Level A' academics (20, 3.1%).
- Reflecting the seniority and experience of the Supervisors cohort, over half had been supervising Candidates for 16 or more years (204, 31.8%) and between 11 and 15 years (132, 20.6%). About a quarter of Supervisors have been supervising Candidates for between six and 10 years (157, 24.5%), and 148 (23.1%) had been supervising for between one and five years.
- A third of Supervisors had supervised more than 10 Candidates to completion (214, 33.4%). Another third had supervised one to five Candidates to completion (208, 32.4%). The remaining third of Supervisors was comprised of 139 (21.7%) Supervisors who had supervised six to 10 Candidates to completion, and 80 (12.5%) Supervisors who had yet to supervise a HDR candidate to completion.
- About six in 10 Supervisors (382, 59.6%) had provided supervision to Candidates in another university other than their current university.
- The experience of working in a supervisory role aside from supervising Candidates (e.g., as a mentor, manager, clinical supervisor, team leader, department head, or head of organisations both within and outside of the university setting) was reported by six in 10 Supervisors (383, 59.8%).
- It was uncommon for Supervisors to be subject to a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) in relation to their HDR supervisory role (622, 97.0%). Only a small number of Supervisors (11, 1.7%) indicated that they have been subject to a NDA, and a smaller number were unsure (8, 1.3%).

Some further detailed information about the Supervisors is presented below.

8.3.1 Program information - Supervisors

8.3.1.1 Degree program – Supervisors

Supervisors provided supervision to multiple Candidates across different degrees. Almost all Supervisors provided PhD supervision (630, 98.3%), with some also providing supervision to Professional Doctorate Candidates (39, 6.1%). A third of the Supervisors indicated that they provide supervision to Candidates enrolled in a Masters by Research (205, 32.0%) and other Masters degree programs (13, 2.0%).

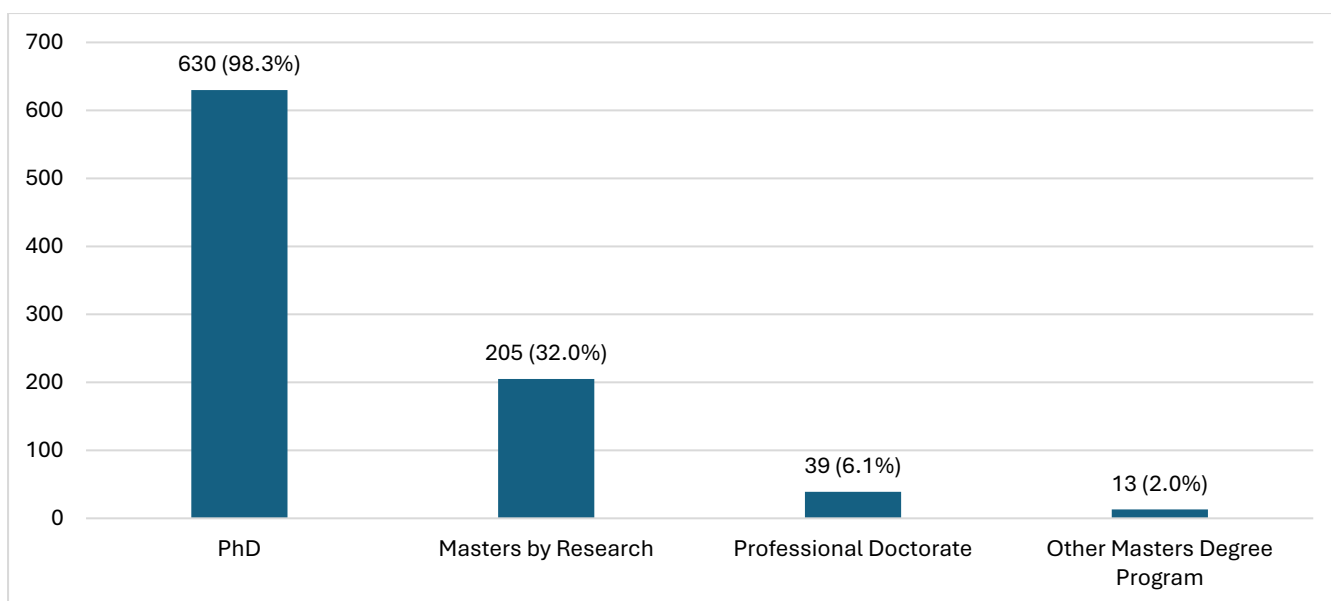


Figure 26. Distribution of degree programs in which supervision is provided

The table below shows the discipline or field in which Supervisors are primarily offering supervision to Candidates.

Table 37. Distribution of primary academic discipline/field in which supervision is provided by universities

	ANU	JCU	RMIT	Swinburne	Adelaide	UoM	UNSW	USyd	UTas	UWA	Total
Agriculture and environmental studies	3	-	-	-	6	8	1	-	13	2	33 (5.1%)
Architecture and built environment	-	-	4	3	-	2	6	1	-	1	17 (2.7%)
Business and management	-	-	-	9	3	5	9	2	4	3	35 (5.5%)
Communications	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	1	7 (1.1%)
Computing and information systems	7	-	1	2	-	5	1	1	-	1	18 (2.8%)
Creative arts	1	-	6	2	-	4	6	1	-	2	22 (3.4%)
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	3 (0.5%)
Engineering	-	-	3	5	2	6	22	-	3	1	42 (6.6%)
Health services and support	6	1	-	3	5	6	5	4	2	9	41 (6.4%)
Humanities, culture and social sciences	18	3	8	8	4	25	15	6	6	7	100 (15.6%)
Law and paralegal studies	7	-	-	-	-	2	9	1	5	-	24 (3.7%)
Medicine	6	-	2	1	9	21	18	24	8	4	93 (14.5%)
Nursing	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	11 (1.7%)
Pharmacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2 (0.3%)
Psychology	1	1	-	10	2	6	3	4	9	2	38 (5.9%)

Rehabilitation	-	-	-	1	1	3	1	3	-	-	9 (1.4%)
Science and mathematics	18	-	6	9	6	28	13	6	24	8	118 (18.4%)
Social work	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	3 (0.5%)
Teacher education	-	2	-	2	-	4	2	-	3	4	17 (2.7%)
Tourism, hospitality, personal services, sport and recreation	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (0.3%)
Veterinary science	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	-	-	6 (0.9%)

8.3.1.2 Supervision continuity

Most Supervisors did not indicate that they had ever withdrawn or been removed from their supervisory role. Of those who had, one in five Supervisors had withdrawn (137, 21.4%) and a small number of Supervisors had been removed (32, 5.0%). When the 169 Supervisors who had withdrawn or been removed from their supervisory role, about half (83, 49.1%) were in a Primary supervisor role.

The common reasons for Supervisors withdrawing or being removed from their supervisory role pertained to the work between Supervisors and Candidates such as Candidates' performance, change in Candidates' research direction, mismatched expectations, and communication issues. Another common reason for Supervisors withdrawing or being removed was relationship challenges with Candidates. A small number of Supervisors indicated that their withdrawal from their supervisory role was due to relationship challenges with other supervisors.

Other reasons for Supervisors withdrawing or being removed were due to practical issues such as Supervisors being overcommitted, leaving the university or going on leave, or being no longer needed. A small number of Supervisors provided reasons such as Candidates withdrawing from the program or leaving the university.

The table below shows the reasons indicated by 169 Supervisors for their withdrawal or removal.

Table 38. Reasons for Supervisors withdrawing or being removed from supervisory role

	Withdrawn (n=137)*	Removed (n=32)*
HDR candidate performance issues	66 (48.2%)	11 (34.4%)
Relationship challenges with the HDR candidate	51 (37.2%)	11 (34.4%)
Change in direction of the HDR candidate's research	33 (24.1%)	13 (40.6%)
Mismatched expectations	32 (23.4%)	6 (18.8%)
I left the university (e.g., change jobs, retired), went or leave, or other employment issues	22 (16.1%)	5 (15.6%)
Communication issues	19 (13.9%)	3 (9.4%)
I was overcommitted	15 (10.9%)	1 (3.1%)
I was no longer needed as a supervisor	5 (3.6%)	1 (3.1%)

Relationship challenges with other supervisors	4 (2.9%)	-
HDR candidate left the university or withdrew	2 (1.5%)	1 (3.1%)

* Supervisors were able to select more than one option for their withdrawal or removal.

8.3.2 Training

8.3.2.1 Training attended

Information provided indicated that almost all Supervisors (625, 97.5%) had attended training relating to their roles as academics and Supervisors.

Most Supervisors indicated that they had attended training regarding their 'university expectations relating to HDR supervision' (536, 83.6%), and 'maintaining research integrity' (480, 74.9%). Whilst over half of the Supervisors had attended training that focused on working with Candidates such as 'acceptable and respectful behaviours' (427, 66.6%), 'managing expectations around HDR candidature' (370, 57.7%), and 'respecting cultural differences' (332, 51.8%), only a third of Supervisors had attended training that focused on managing supervisor-candidate interpersonal relationships such as 'managing HDR candidate relationship issues' (219, 34.2%), or more specifically, on 'responding sensitively to student disclosures' concerning, for example, their mental health or gendered violence experiences (231, 36.0%)

The various types of training Supervisors have attended are detailed in the table below.

Table 39. Training attended by Supervisors

Training Attended	n=641
University expectations relating to HDR supervision	536 (83.6%)
Managing expectations around HDR candidature	370 (57.7%)
Effective communication with HDR candidates	276 (43.1%)
Managing conflicts of interest	348 (54.3%)
Maintaining research integrity	480 (74.9%)
Acceptable and respectful behaviours	427 (66.6%)
Respecting cultural differences	332 (51.8%)
Responding sensitively to student disclosures (e.g., mental health challenges, gendered violence)	231 (36.0%)
Managing HDR candidate relationship issues	219 (34.2%)

*Supervisors were able to select more than one type of training

A small number of Supervisors (37, 5.8%) also indicated that they had attended training that addressed general HDR supervision issues such as providing HDR feedback and review and viva voce, as well as issues pertaining to modern slavery, mental health first-aid, diverse identities, sexual harassment and sexual violence, neurodiversity, and working with Indigenous peoples.

8.3.2.2 Training providers

Most of the training attended was delivered by the Graduate Research School (360, 56.2%), the Supervisors' Faculty (285, 44.5%) or School (151, 23.6%), with some delivered by other sections of their universities (68, 10.6%). Some training attended was external to the university such as those delivered by another university (68, 10.6%) or an organisation (84, 13.1%).

8.3.2.3 Last attended training

The identified training attended occurred mostly within the last three years (511, 82.8%). Almost half of the Supervisors attended the training less than one year ago (303, 47.3%). Approximately one in seven Supervisors last attended training three or more years ago (89, 13.9%), with some (35, 5.5%) indicating that they last attended training more than 5 years ago.

8.3.2.4 Not attending training

Of the 16 (2.5%) Supervisors who indicated that they had not attended any training, the reasons offered by these few Supervisors include – they use other ways to maintain or improve their supervision skills (e.g., reading the literature, consulting with colleagues), they have the necessary supervision skills, they did not have the time, they were not offered training, or that the training offered was inappropriate.

9. APPENDIX D – Candidate experiences – prevalence of behaviours

Candidate experiences of unacceptable behaviours are discussed in section 4 of this report. Additional information is provided below regarding the prevalence of the three categories of behaviours, as mapped against demographic and program information provided by research participants.

Behaviours that made Candidates feel ignored, overlooked or uncared for

Candidate experiences of the ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories as shown in Table 40.

Table 40. Candidates: prevalence of ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours by demographics

		No experience (n=515)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=675)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Respondent age	29 and under	177 (34.4%)	256 (37.9%)	1 (ref)	-	5.364
	30 – 39	185 (35.9%)	250 (37.0%)	0.93	0.71-1.22	
	40 – 49	78 (15.1%)	83 (12.3%)	0.74	0.51-1.06	
	50 and above	62 (12.0%)	61 (9.0%)	0.68	0.46-1.02	
Gender identity	Man or male	183 (35.5%)	198 (29.3%)	1 (ref)	-	4.913
	Woman or female	318 (61.7%)	447 (66.2%)	1.30	1.02-1.66*	
	Non-binary/different identity	11 (2.1%)	19 (2.8%)	1.60	0.75-3.45	
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	No	393 (76.3%)	472 (69.9%)	1 (ref)	-	5.285*
	Yes	100 (19.4%)	167 (24.7%)	1.39	1.05-1.84	
Birthplace	Overseas	268 (52.0%)	300 (44.4%)	1 (ref)	-	6.975**
	Australia	233 (45.2%)	357 (52.9%)	1.37	1.08-1.73**	
Language background	Non-English first language	201 (39.0%)	200 (29.6%)	1 (ref)	-	10.615**
	English first language	306 (59.4%)	456 (67.6%)	1.50	1.17-1.91**	
Disability or chronic illness	No	420 (81.6%)	479 (71.0%)	1 (ref)	-	15.592***
	Yes	86 (16.7%)	175 (25.9%)	1.78	1.34-2.38***	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting ‘prefer not to answer’ or providing an unclear response.

Candidate experiences of the ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours were also compared based on Candidate’s studies information as shown in Table 41.

Table 41. Candidates: prevalence of ‘ignored, overlooked or uncared for’ behaviours by studies information

		No experience (n=515)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=675)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Residential status	International	192 (37.3%)	196 (29.0%)	1 (ref)	-	9.036**
	Domestic	323 (62.7%)	479 (71.0%)	1.45	1.14-1.85**	
Program type	PhD	469 (91.1%)	631 (93.5%)	1 (ref)	-	2.434
	Master by research/Professional Doctorate/Combined program	46 (8.9%)	44 (6.5%)	0.71	(0.46-1.09)	
Enrollment type	Full-time	399 (77.5%)	499 (73.9%)	1 (ref)	-	7.737*
	Part-time	114 (22.1%)	161(23.9%)	1.13	0.86-1.49	
	On program leave	2 (0.4%)	15 (2.2%)	6.00	1.36-26.38*	
Years of higher degree research completed	1 – 2 years	339 (65.8%)	358 (53.0%)	1 (ref)	-	22.207***
	3 – 4 years	144 (28.0%)	239 (35.4%)	1.57	1.22-2.03***	
	5+ years	32 (6.2%)	78 (11.6%)	2.31	1.49-3.58***	
Number of supervisors	1 or 2 supervisors	233 (45.2%)	311 (46.1%)	1 (ref)	-	0.081
	3 or more supervisors	282 (54.8%)	364 (53.9%)	0.98	(0.77-1.22)	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting ‘prefer not to answer’ or providing an unclear response.

Supervisor behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries

Candidate experiences of the ‘unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries’ behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories as shown in Table 42.

Table 42. Candidates: prevalence of ‘unprofessional or crossed professional boundary’ behaviours by demographics

		No experience (n=998)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=186)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Respondent age	29 and under	371 (37.2%)	57 (30.6%)	1	-	12.213**
	30 – 39	350 (35.1%)	86 (46.2%)	1.60	1.11-2.30*	
	40 – 49	134 (13.4%)	22 (11.8%)	1.07	0.63-1.82	
	50 and above	115 (11.5%)	11 (5.9%)	0.62	0.32-1.23	
Gender identity	Man or male	322 (32.3%)	61 (32.8%)	1	-	0.717
	Woman or female	644 (64.5%)	115 (61.8%)	0.94	0.67-1.32	
	Non-binary/different identity	23 (2.3%)	6 (3.2%)	1.38	0.54-3.52	
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	No	733 (73.4%)	125 (67.2%)	1	-	3.170
	Yes	216 (21.6%)	51 (27.4%)	1.39	0.97-1.98	
Birthplace	Overseas	482 (48.3%)	85 (45.7%)	1	-	0.421
	Australia	490 (49.1%)	96 (51.6%)	1.11	0.81-1.53	

Language background	Non-English first language	338 (33.9%)	62 (33.3%)	1	-	0.009
	English first language	643 (64.4%)	116 (62.4%)	0.98	0.70-1.38	
Disability or chronic illness	No	762 (76.4%)	135 (72.6%)	1	-	1.514
	Yes	211 (21.1%)	47 (25.3%)	1.26	0.87-1.81	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

Candidate experiences of the 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' behaviours were also compared based on Candidate's studies information as shown in Table 43.

Table 43. Candidates: prevalence of 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundary' behaviours by studies information

		No experience (n=998)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=186)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Residential status	International	325 (32.6%)	125 (67.2%)	1	-	0.004
	Domestic	673 (67.4%)	61 (32.8%)	0.99	0.71-1.38	
Program type	PhD	920 (92.2%)	174 (93.5%)	1	-	0.415
	Master by research/Professional Doctorate/Combined program	78 (7.8%)	12 (6.5%)	0.82	0.43-1.53	
Enrollment type	Full-time	754 (75.6%)	137 (73.7%)	1	-	0.302
	Part-time	229 (22.9%)	46 (24.7%)	1.11	0.77-1.59	
	On program leave	15 (1.5%)	3 (1.6%)	1.10	0.31-3.85	
Years of higher degree research completed	1 – 2 years	602 (60.3%)	87 (46.8%)	1	-	13.092**
	3 – 4 years	311 (31.2%)	73 (39.2%)	1.62	1.16-2.28**	
	5+ years	85 (8.5%)	26 (14.0%)	2.12	1.29-3.47**	
Number of supervisors	1 or 2 supervisors	468 (46.9%)	74 (39.8%)	1	-	3.192
	3 or more supervisors	530 (53.1%)	112 (60.2%)	1.34	0.97-1.84	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

Behaviours that made Candidates feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against

Candidate experiences of the 'feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against' behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories as shown in Table 44.

Table 44. Candidates: prevalence of ‘unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against’ behaviours by demographics

		No experience (n=932)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=263)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Respondent age	29 and under	347 (37.2%)	85 (32.3%)	1 (ref)	-	10.019
	30 – 39	338 (36.3%)	100 (38.0%)	1.21	0.87-1.67	
	40 – 49	119 (12.8%)	44 (16.7%)	1.51	0.99-2.30	
	50 and above	106 (11.4%)	19 (7.2%)	0.73	0.43-1.26	
Gender identity	Man or male	316 (33.9%)	68 (25.9%)	1 (ref)	-	7.147*
	Woman or female	589 (63.2%)	179 (68.1%)	1.41	1.04-1.93*	
	Non-binary/different identity	20 (2.1%)	10 (3.8%)	2.32	1.04-5.19*	
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	No	687 (73.7%)	178 (67.7%)	1 (ref)	-	2.096
	Yes	204 (21.9%)	67 (25.5%)	1.27	0.92-1.75	
Birthplace	Overseas	449 (48.2%)	120 (45.6%)	1 (ref)	-	0.599
	Australia	456 (48.9%)	136 (51.7%)	1.12	0.85-1.47	
Language background	Non-English first language	315 (33.8%)	88 (33.5%)	1 (ref)	-	0.000
	English first language	598 (64.2%)	167 (63.5%)	1.00	0.75-1.34	
Disability or chronic illness	No	731 (78.4%)	171 (65.0%)	1 (ref)	-	20.376***
	Yes	178 (19.1%)	84 (31.9%)	2.02	1.48-2.75***	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting ‘prefer not to answer’ or providing an unclear response.

Candidate experiences of the ‘feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against’ behaviours were also compared based on Candidate’s studies information as shown in Table 45.

Table 45. Candidates: prevalence of ‘unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against’ behaviours by studies information

		No experience (n=932)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=263)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Residential status	International	308 (33.0%)	81 (30.8%)	1 (ref)	-	0.472
	Domestic	624 (67.0%)	182 (69.2%)	1.11	0.83-1.49	
Program type	PhD	856 (91.8%)	248 (94.3%)	1 (ref)	-	1.752
	Master by research/Professional	76 (8.2%)	15 (5.7%)	0.68	0.39-1.21	

	Doctorate/Combined program					
Enrollment type	Full-time	708 (76.0%)	194 (73.8%)	1 (ref)	-	8.354*
	Part-time	215 (23.1%)	60 (22.8%)	1.02	0.73-1.41	
	On program leave	9 (1.0%)	9 (3.4%)	3.65	1.43-9.32**	
Years of higher degree research completed	1 – 2 years	577 (61.9%)	123 (46.8%)	1 (ref)	-	20.638***
	3 – 4 years	279 (29.9%)	104 (39.5%)	1.75	1.30-2.36***	
	5+ years	76 (8.2%)	36 (13.7%)	2.22	1.43-3.46***	
Number of supervisors	1 or 2 supervisors	433 (46.5%)	116 (44.1%)	1 (ref)	-	0.457
	3 or more supervisors	499 (53.5%)	147 (55.9%)	1.10	0.84-1.45	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

10. APPENDIX E – Supervisor experiences – prevalence of behaviours

Supervisor experiences of unacceptable behaviours are discussed in section 4 of this report. Additional information is provided below regarding the prevalence of the three categories of behaviours, as mapped against demographic and employment information provided by research participants.

Behaviours affecting supervision practice

Supervisor experiences of ‘behaviours affecting supervision practice’ were compared based on several demographic categories as shown in Table 46.

Table 46. Prevalence of ‘behaviours affecting supervision practice’ by demographics

		No experience (n=265)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=371)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Respondent age	39 and under	43 (16.2%)	53 (14.3%)	1 (ref)	-	16.444**
	40 – 49	55 (20.8%)	120 (32.3%)	1.77	1.06-2.96*	
	50 – 59	82 (30.9%)	118 (31.8%)	1.17	0.71-1.91	
	60 – 69	52 (19.6%)	55 (14.8%)	0.86	0.49-1.49	
	70 and above	15 (5.7%)	7 (1.9%)	0.38	0.14-1.01	
Gender identity	Man or male	116 (43.8%)	150 (40.4%)	1 (ref)	-	0.900
	Woman or female	141 (53.2%)	213 (57.4%)	1.17	0.85-1.61	
	Non-binary/different identity	3 (1.1%)	4 (1.1%)	1.03	0.23-4.70	
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	No	215 (81.1%)	311 (83.8%)	1 (ref)	-	0.009
	Yes	29 (10.9%)	43 (11.6%)	1.03	0.62-1.69	
Birthplace	Overseas	110 (41.5%)	164 (44.2%)	1 (ref)	-	0.065
	Australia	142 (53.6%)	203 (54.7%)	0.96	0.69-1.32	
Language background	Non-English first language	58 (21.9%)	70 (18.9%)	1 (ref)	-	1.152
	English first language	200 (75.5%)	299 (80.6%)	1.24	0.84-1.83	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting ‘prefer not to answer’ or providing an unclear response.

Supervisor experiences of ‘behaviours affecting supervision practice’ based on their employment information, as shown in Table 47.

Table 47. Prevalence of 'behaviours affecting supervision practice' by employment information

		No experience (n=265)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=371)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Length of employment at university	Less than 1 year	6 (2.3%)	5 (1.3%)	1 (ref)	-	3.263
	1 – 5 years	48 (18.1%)	81 (21.8%)	2.03	0.59-6.99	
	6 – 10 years	59 (22.3%)	93 (25.1%)	1.89	0.55-6.48	
	11 – 15 years	56 (21.1%)	73 (19.7%)	1.56	0.45-5.39	
	16+ years	96 (36.2%)	119 (32.1%)	1.49	0.44-5.02	
Employment type	Permanent	179 (67.5%)	296 (79.8%)	1 (ref)	-	16.236***
	Fixed-term contract	74 (28.3%)	72 (19.4%)	0.58	0.40-0.84**	
	Casual	11 (4.2%)	3 (0.8%)	0.17	0.05-0.60**	
Employment level	Level A	11 (4.2%)	9 (2.4%)	1 (ref)	-	4.611
	Level B	38 (14.3%)	46 (12.4%)	1.48	0.56-3.94	
	Level C	60 (22.6%)	90 (24.3%)	1.83	0.72-4.69	
	Level D	58 (21.9%)	100 (27.0%)	2.11	0.82-5.39	
	Level E	93 (35.1%)	122 (32.9%)	1.60	0.64-4.03	
Length of time supervising HDR candidates	1 – 5 years	67 (25.3%)	81 (21.8%)	1 (ref)	-	3.818
	6 – 10 years	61 (23.0%)	95 (25.6%)	1.29	0.82-2.03	
	11 – 15 years	47 (17.7%)	84 (22.6%)	1.48	0.91-2.39	
	16+ years	90 (34.0%)	111 (29.9%)	1.02	0.67-1.56	
Number of current HDR candidates	1 or 2	100 (37.7%)	86 (23.2%)	1 (ref)	-	20.099***
	3 or 4	90 (34.0%)	126 (34.0%)	1.63	1.10-2.42*	
	5 or more	75 (28.3%)	159 (42.9%)	2.47	1.66-3.67***	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

Candidate behaviours that were unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries

Supervisor experiences of Candidate behaviours that were 'unprofessional or crossed professional boundaries' were compared based on several demographic categories (Table 48) and employment information (Table 49). It is noted that the small sub-sample of 59 Supervisors who experienced the behaviours may mean that there is insufficient statistical power to identify differences between groups.

Table 48. Prevalence of 'crossed professional boundaries or acted unprofessionally' by demographics

		No experience (n=571)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=59)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Respondent age	39 and under	85 (14.9%)	9 (15.3%)	1 (ref)	-	1.518
	40 – 49	154 (27.0%)	18 (30.5%)	1.10	0.48-2.56	

	50 – 59	176 (30.8%)	21 (35.6%)	1.13	0.50-2.57	
	60 – 69	99 (17.3%)	8 (13.6%)	0.76	0.28-2.07	
	70 and above	20 (3.5%)	1 (1.7%)	0.47	0.06-3.95	
Gender identity	Man or male	244 (42.7%)	20 (33.3%)	1 (ref)	-	1.975
	Woman or female	313 (54.8%)	37 (62.7%)	1.44	0.82-2.55	
	Non-binary/different identity	5 (0.9%)	1 (1.7%)	2.44	0.27-21.91	
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	No	475 (83.2%)	45 (76.3%)	1 (ref)	-	1.217
	Yes	62 (10.9%)	9 (15.3%)	1.53	0.1-3.29	
Birthplace	Overseas	240 (42.0%)	30 (50.8%)	1 (ref)	-	1.504
	Australia	314 (55.0%)	28 (47.5%)	0.71	0.42-1.23	
Language background	Non-English first language	114 (20.0%)	13 (22.0%)	1 (ref)	-	0.100
	English first language	448 (78.5%)	46 (78.0%)	0.90	0.47-1.72	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

Table 49. Prevalence of 'crossed professional boundaries or acted unprofessionally' by employment information

		No experience (n=571)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=59)	OR	95% CI	χ²
Length of employment at university	Less than 1 year	10 (1.8%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (ref)	-	3.928
	1 – 5 years	111 (19.4%)	15 (25.4%)	1.35	0.16-11.32	
	6 – 10 years	139 (24.3%)	10 (16.9%)	0.72	0.08-6.20	
	11 – 15 years	115 (20.1%)	16 (27.1%)	1.39	0.17-11.60	
	16+ years	196 (34.3%)	17 (28.8%)	0.87	0.11-7.19	
Employment type	Permanent	428 (75.0%)	42 (71.2%)	1 (ref)	-	0.620
	Fixed-term contract	130 (22.8%)	16 (27.1%)	1.25	0.68-2.30	
	Casual	13 (2.3%)	1 (1.7%)	0.78	0.10-6.14	
Employment level	Level A	17 (3.0%)	3 (5.1%)	1 (ref)	-	3.170
	Level B	77 (13.5%)	5 (8.5%)	0.37	0.08-1.69	
	Level C	131 (22.9%)	17 (28.8%)	0.74	0.20-2.77	
	Level D	145 (25.4%)	12 (20.3%)	0.47	0.12-1.83	
	Level E	193 (33.8%)	21 (35.6%)	0.62	0.17-2.28	
Length of time supervising HDR candidates	1 – 5 years	136 (23.8%)	10 (16.9%)	1 (ref)	-	3.230
	6 – 10 years	136 (23.8%)	18 (30.5%)	1.80	0.80-4.04	
	11 – 15 years	115 (20.1%)	15 (25.4%)	1.77	0.77-4.10	
	16+ years	184 (32.2%)	16 (27.1%)	1.18	0.52-2.69	
	1 or 2	170 (29.8%)	13 (22.0%)	1 (ref)	-	1.588
	3 or 4	195 (34.2%)	23 (39.0%)	1.54	0.76-3.14	

Number of current HDR candidates	5 or more	206 (36.1%)	23 (39.0%)	1.46	0.72-2.97	
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*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

Behaviours that made Supervisors feel unsafe, threatened, bullied, or discriminated against

Supervisor experiences of the 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' behaviours were compared based on several demographic categories (Table 50) and employment information (Table 51). It is noted that the small sub-sample of 54 Supervisors who experienced the behaviours may mean that there is insufficient statistical power to identify differences between groups.

Table 50. Prevalence of 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' by demographics

		No experience (n=583)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=54)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
Respondent age	39 and under	89 (15.3%)	7 (13.0%)	1 (ref)	-	3.043
	40 – 49	162 (27.8%)	12 (22.2%)	0.94	0.36-2.48	
	50 – 59	177 (30.4%)	22 (40.7%)	1.58	0.65-3.84	
	60 – 69	99 (17.0%)	8 (14.8%)	1.03	0.36-2.95	
	70 and above	21 (3.6%)	1 (1.9%)	0.61	0.07-5.19	
Gender identity	Man or male	248 (42.5%)	18 (33.3%)	1 (ref)	-	5.137
	Woman or female	320 (54.9%)	34 (63.0%)	1.46	0.81-2.65	
	Non-binary/different identity	5 (0.9%)	2 (3.7%)	5.51	0.99-30.42	
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	No	481 (82.5%)	47 (87.0%)	1 (ref)	-	0.016
	Yes	65 (11.1%)	6 (11.1%)	0.95	0.39-2.30	
Birthplace	Overseas	251 (43.1%)	23 (42.6%)	1 (ref)	-	0.067
	Australia	314 (53.9%)	31 (57.4%)	1.08	1.89	
Language background	Non-English first language	121 (20.8%)	8 (14.8%)	1 (ref)	-	1.187
	English first language	453 (77.7%)	46 (85.2%)	1.54	0.71-3.34	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

Table 51. Prevalence of 'unsafe, threatened, bullied or discriminated against' by employment information

		No experience (n=583)	Experienced any type of behaviour (n=54)	OR	95% CI	χ^2
	Less than 1 year	10 (1.7%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (ref)	-	3.613
	1 – 5 years	114 (19.6%)	14 (25.9%)	1.23	0.15-10.33	

Length of employment at university	6 – 10 years	136 (23.3%)	16 (29.6%)	1.18	0.14-9.80	
	11 – 15 years	120 (20.6%)	10 (18.5%)	0.83	0.10-7.19	
	16+ years	203 (34.8%)	13 (24.1%)	0.64	0.77-5.39	
Employment type	Permanent	433 (74.3%)	43 (79.6%)	1 (ref)	-	1.674
	Fixed-term contract	136 (23.3%)	11 (20.4%)	0.81	0.41-1.62	
	Casual	14 (2.4%)	-	-	-	
Employment level	Level A	17 (2.9%)	3 (5.6%)	1 (ref)	-	6.123
	Level B	79 (13.6%)	4 (7.4%)	0.29	0.06-1.40	
	Level C	141 (24.2%)	9 (16.7%)	0.36	0.09-1.47	
	Level D	140, (24.0%)	19 (35.2%)	0.77	0.21-2.87	
	Level E	197 (33.8%)	19 (35.2%)	0.55	0.15-2.04	
Length of time supervising HDR candidates	1 – 5 years	136 (23.3%)	11 (20.4%)	1 (ref)	-	1.063
	6 – 10 years	142 (24.4%)	15 (27.8%)	1.31	0.58-2.94	
	11 – 15 years	118 (20.2%)	13 (24.1%)	1.36	0.59-3.16	
	16+ years	187 (32.1%)	15 (27.8%)	0.99	0.44-2.23	
Number of current HDR candidates	1 or 2	173 (29.7%)	12 (22.2%)	1 (ref)	-	5.672
	3 or 4	203 (34.8%)	14 (25.9%)	0.99	0.45-2.21	
	5 or more	207 (35.5%)	28 (51.9%)	1.95	0.96-3.95	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. Percentages may not add to 100 due to respondents selecting 'prefer not to answer' or providing an unclear response.

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