



**UNSW**  
Australian  
Human Rights  
Institute



## ONLINE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

*Higher Degree Researchers – Online Surveys*

### **Understanding HDR candidate-supervisor relationship challenges (Phase 2)**

*Professor Jan Breckenridge, Professor Belinda Hewitt, Professor Justine Nolan, Dr Allison Henry*

#### **1. What is the research study about?**

You are invited to take part in this research study. The research study aims to examine the workplace relationship issues commonly arising between Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates (known as graduate researchers at some universities) and their supervisors (known as advisors at some universities), and how these issues are managed within Australian universities. Such issues include mismatched expectations, communication problems, bullying, supervisor and candidate performance, conflicts of interest, inappropriate relationships and attachments and sexual harassment and sexual assault. The results of this research study will help to address knowledge gaps, enhance understanding of the HDR experience, and provide the basis for training in more effective responses.

You have been invited because you are currently a HDR candidate at one of the 10 Australian universities participating in the study:

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

#### **2. Who is conducting this research?**

The study is being led by the Australian Human Rights Institute and the Gendered Violence Research Network at UNSW Sydney. The research is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Professor Jan Breckenridge – Head of the School of Social Sciences, Co-Convener of the Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Sydney (CI).
- Professor Belinda Hewitt – School of Social and Political Sciences, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne (CI).
- Professor Justine Nolan – Director, Australian Human Rights Institute, UNSW Sydney (CI).
- Dr Allison Henry – Research Fellow, Australian Human Rights Institute, UNSW Sydney (CI, Project Manager, Lead Researcher).

**Research Funder:** This research is being funded by the Australian Council of Graduate Research and individual Australian universities participating in the research (see above at 1).

#### **3. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

Before you decide to participate in this research study, we need to ensure that it is ok for you to take part. The research study is looking recruit people who meet the following criteria:

- aged 18 years of age or older
- currently enrolled as a Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidate (ie undertaking Masters by research, PhD or Professional Doctorate) at one of the 10 participating universities
- currently located in Australia



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#### **4. Do I have to take part in this research study?**

Participation in any research study is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to.

Participation in this research study is separate from participation in your HDR program and choosing to/not to participate will not have any impact on your program of study.

If you decide you want to take part in the research study, you will be asked to:

- read the information carefully (ask questions if necessary);
- complete the online survey.

#### **5. What does participation in this research require, and are there any risks involved?**

If you decide to take part in the research study, we will ask you to complete an online survey. The survey will ask you demographic questions (for example, your age and gender), questions about your research program (for example, your year of candidature, School / Faculty, whether you are an international student) and questions about your experience as a HDR candidate and your relationship with your supervisor/s.

It should take 25-30mins to complete.

If you experience discomfort or feelings of distress while participating in the research and you require support, you can stop participating at any time. You can also tell a member of the research team and they will provide you with a list of support services and their contact details are provided below.

#### **6. What are the possible benefits to participation?**

We hope to use information we get from this research study to benefit future HDR candidates and supervisors.

There is currently limited systematic research on the impact and incidence of HDR candidate-supervisor workplace relationship issues in the Australian context. This research will address current gaps in knowledge, collecting anonymised reports on the types of issues arising between HDR candidates and supervisors and exploring scenarios of effective and ineffective institutional responses from the perspective of HDR candidates and supervisors.

The direct testimony of HDRs and supervisors will not only enhance understanding of the HDR experience but also provide a platform for the development of training materials to support supervision reform. The research findings will inform the development of good practice guidance and supervisor training materials by the Australian Council of Graduate Research and others that can be used by all Australian universities.

#### **7. What will happen to information about me?**

Submission of the online survey is an indication of your consent. By clicking the 'I agree to participate' button you are providing your permission for the research team to collect and use information about you for the research study.



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The research team will store the data collected from you for this research project for a minimum of 7 years after the completion of the research.

The information about you will be stored in a non-identifiable format where your identify will be unknown.

You will be asked to provide your consent for the research team to share or use the information collected from you in future research that will be an extension of, or closely related to, the original project; or is in the same general area of research.

Your information will only be shared in a format that will not identify you.

**8. How and when will I find out what the results of the research study are?**

The research team intend to publish and report the results of the research. All Information will be published in a way that will not identify you.

A copy of the results of this research will be emailed to all HDR candidates and supervisors at the participating universities at the completion of this research project.

**9. What if I want to withdraw from the research study?**

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. You can do this by closing the survey. If you withdraw from the research, we will destroy any information that has already been collected. Once you have submitted the survey however, we will not be able to withdraw your responses as the survey is anonymous.

**10. What should I do if I have further questions about my involvement in the research study?**

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query. If at any stage during the study, you become distressed or require additional support from someone not involved in the research please call:

**Contact for feelings of distress**

<b>Name/Organisation</b>	1800 RESPECT
<b>Telephone</b>	1800 737 732

<b>Name/Organisation</b>	Lifeline Australia
<b>Telephone</b>	13 11 14

If you require further information regarding this study or if you have any problems which may be related to your involvement in the study, you can contact the following member/s of the research team:

**Research Team Contact**

<b>Name</b>	Dr Allison Henry
<b>Position</b>	Research Fellow, Australian Human Rights Institute, UNSW Sydney
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:allison.henry@unsw.edu.au">allison.henry@unsw.edu.au</a>

**What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the research study?**



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If you have a complaint regarding any aspect of the study or the way it is being conducted, please contact the UNSW Human Ethics Coordinator:

**Complaints Contact**

<b>Position</b>	Human Research Ethics Coordinator
<b>Telephone</b>	+ 61 2 9385 6222
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:humanethics@unsw.edu.au">humanethics@unsw.edu.au</a>
<b>Reference Number</b>	iRECS4393

This study has been approved by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, you can contact the Executive Officer of the HREC on +61 3 6226 6254 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote H0030439.



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## **Consent Form – Participant providing own consent**

### **Declaration by the participant**

By checking the **'I agree to participate'** button below:

- I understand I am being asked to provide consent to participate in this research study;
  - I have read the Participant Information Sheet, or it has been provided to me in a language that I understand;
  - I provide my consent for the information collected about me to be used for the purpose of this research study only.
  - I understand that if necessary, I can ask questions and the research team will respond to my questions.
  - I freely agree to participate in this research study as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study and withdrawal will not affect my relationship with any of the named organisations and/or research team members;
- I understand that I can download a copy of this consent form from the [project webpage](#).

**I agree to participate, start survey**