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# Coursework in the VU PhD

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Semester 1, 2023

**ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising  
Research**

**ROP8002 Research Integrity and Ethics**

## Coursework in the VU PhD: Semester 1, 2023

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

**NB: In S1 2023, the PhD coursework units will be taught face to face on the Footscray Park Campus, C203. Students will be notified of details one week before classes commence.**

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

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

### 1. HDR Researcher Integrity Modules

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you have any queries regarding your access to the VU Collaborate space, please

contact [Researcher.development@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researcher.development@vu.edu.au).

## **2. Required Coursework Units**

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

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

### **ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising Research ROP8002 Research Integrity and Ethics**

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

#### **Modes of Delivery**

This semester, the units will be face to face on the Footscray Park Campus, C203 (see **attached timetable, p. 5**).

- Full-time students take both units in the first semester;
- P/t students will take ROP8001 in the first semester and ROP8002 in the second.

ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising Research  
Tuesdays, 10am-12pm AEST/AEDT x 7 (+ PhD Coursework Conference)

ROP8002 Researcher Integrity and Ethics  
Thursday 10am-12.30pm x 6 (+ PhD Coursework Conference)

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

## **Frequently Asked Questions about PhD Coursework at VU**

### **Am I required to complete these units?**

YES, all commencing<sup>1</sup> PhD students are expected to enrol in and complete the units. Successful completion is a requirement for progress to Confirmation of Candidature, and thus for graduation. It is also a supportive way to commence your research degree and will connect you with other students and staff.

### **Will how I perform in the units affect my progression to Confirmation of**

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<sup>1</sup> Students entering VU with Advanced Candidature are not required to enrol in the units.

## **Candidature?**

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

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

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

## **Do I need to pay extra for the units?**

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

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

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

## **Can I apply for exemption from these units?**

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

Please note that the **Application Form for Advanced Standing must be completed and returned to the Academic Coordinator no later than 13 February 2023**, to be considered for S1 2023. Documentary evidence of your prior study ([which needs to be at AQF level 10](#)) and a statement of support from your supervisor are required.

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

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

- consolidating your understanding of the nature and expectations of research;
- connecting you with other students; meeting other staff in the Graduate Research area;
- helping you prepare for Confirmation of Candidature by working with your research topic in the unit assessments.

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

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

## PhD Coursework Units: S1 2023

<b>Graduate Researcher Orientation (compulsory for all commencing students to attend)</b>	<b>Friday 17 March</b>	<b>10am-12.30pm</b>
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- Commencing students will be enrolled automatically into coursework units; enrolment can be checked on your MyVU Portal
- All classes will be held **in person C203 Footscray Park Campus** (unless otherwise notified) and you will be sent an invitation one week prior to classes commencing; you will *not need* to allocate on MyTimetable.
- Full-time students undertake **both** ROP8001 and ROP8002 in first semester; part-time students take ROP8001 in the first semester, ROP8002 in the following.

### 1. ROP8001 Conceptualising and Contextualising Research

Day	Date	Time	Room
Tuesday	1. 7 March 2. 14 March 3. 21 March 4. 28 March 5. 4 April 6. 18 April 7. 2 May	10-12pm	C203, FP

### 2. ROP8002 Research Integrity and Ethics

Day	Date	Time	Room
Thursday	1. 16 March 2. 23 March 3. 30 March 4. 6 April 5. 20 April 6. 27 April	10-12.30 pm	C203, FP

### 3. PhD Coursework Conference (All students required)

Wednesday	24 May	9-1pm	C203, FP
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