



The PhD experience – through the looking glass

MDHS Leadership Conference 2019

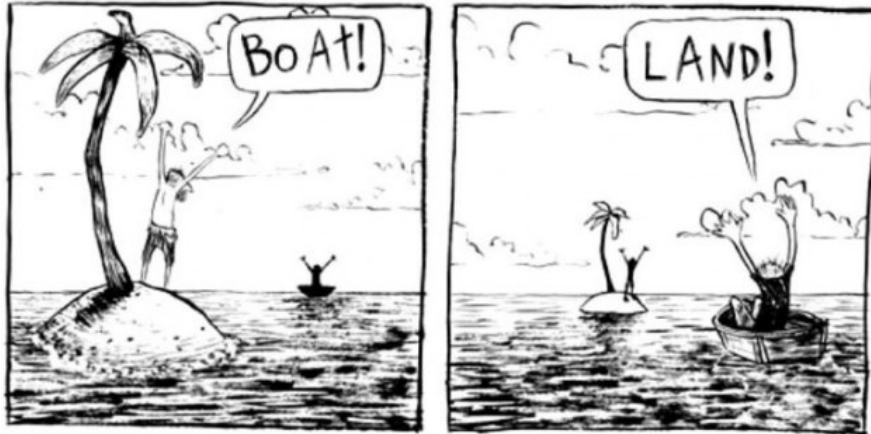
Professor Alex Boussioutas MBBS PhD FRACP

Associate Dean Graduate Research





Perspective





The overview

The University

University of
Melbourne
has
4,353
graduate research
students



1,552
(36%)
of them are international



4,000 
of them are
PhD students

The Faculty

Medicine, Dentistry
and Health
Sciences has
1,498
graduate research
students



417
(28%)
of them are international



1,367 (34%
OF
UOM) 
of them are
PhD students

3

Out of the 1498 MDHS students, 1407 are doctorate level (includes PhD and other doctorate programs) and 91 are enrolled in Masters by Research programs.



MDHS

- ~1600 HDR students
- ~1200 staff supervisors
- ~4000 honorary supervisors
- Diverse disciplines
- Geographically dispersed





Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) Research Training Review

Final report delivered in March 2016

- 1. Supporting our research training candidates**
2. Providing financial support to research training candidates
3. Research training delivering benefits to the nation
4. Delivering transferable skills development through HDR training
5. Supporting industry-relevant research projects
6. Enabling industry placements in research training
7. Measuring and articulating the added value of HDR training
8. International benchmarking of HDR offerings
9. Assessment of both candidate and thesis
- 10. Evaluation of supervisor competency and performance**
11. Under-represented groups in HDR training

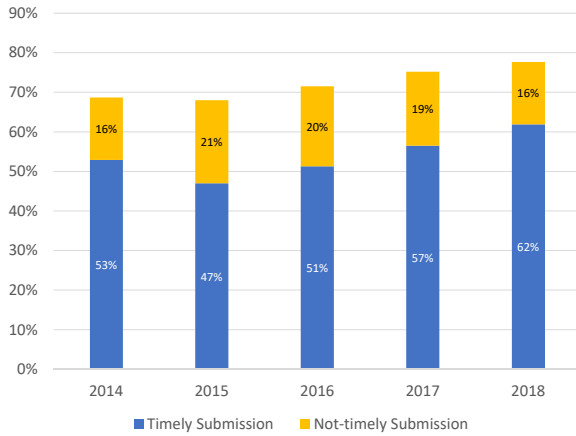
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<http://acola.org.au/wp/PDF/SAF13/SAF13%20RTS%20report.pdf>

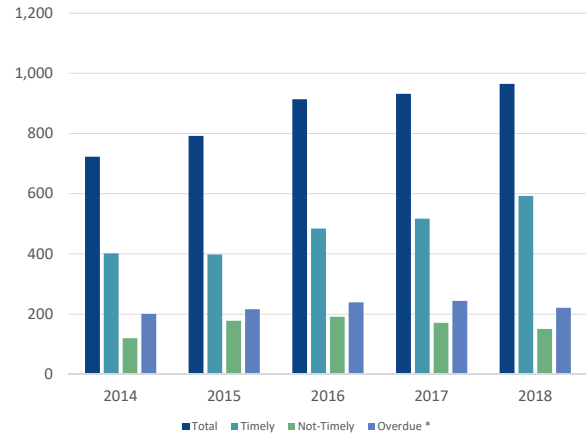


Overview of timely completions UoM

% completing



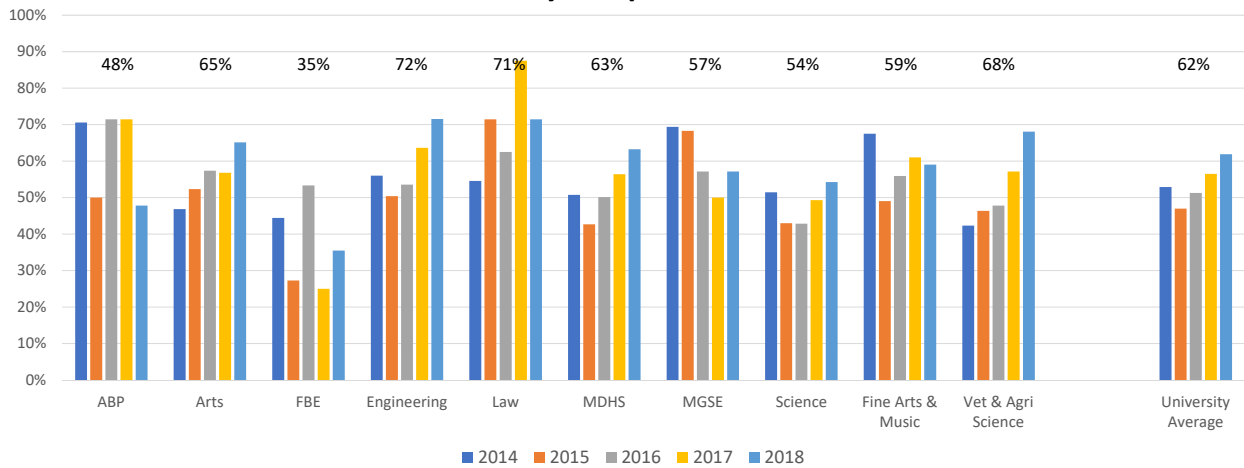
n completing





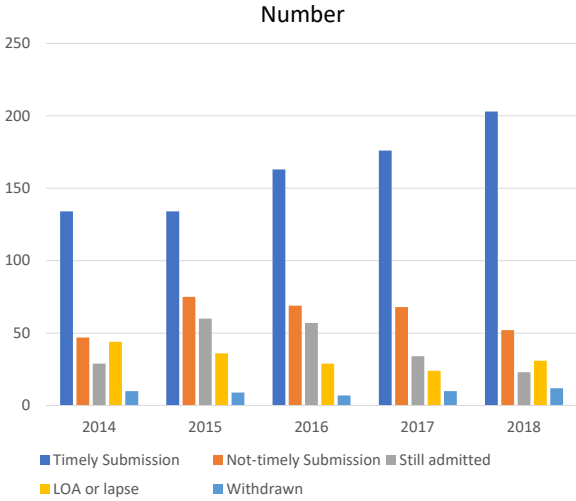
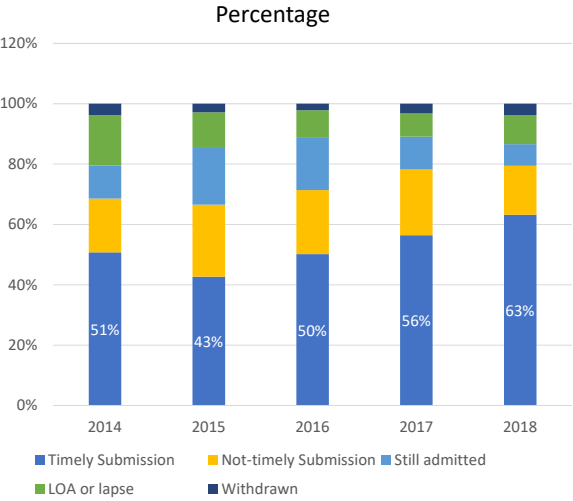
University faculties – timely completions

% timely completions 2018





MDHS completions



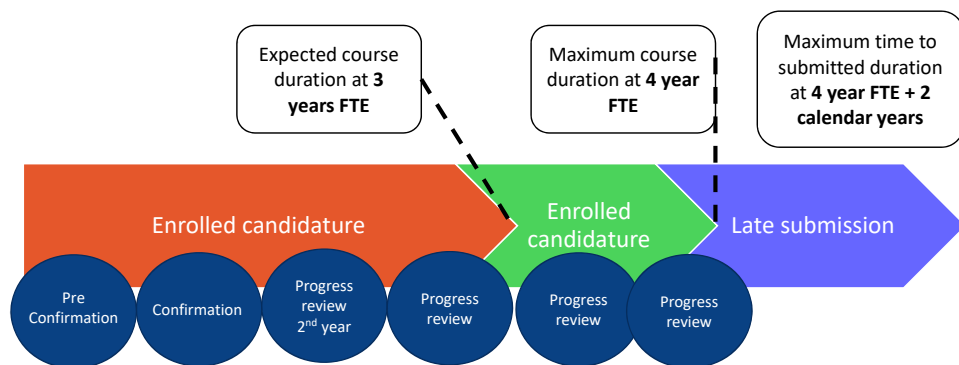


70% non-timely complete 1-120 days late

Cohort	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Timely Submission	51%	43%	50%	56%	63%
<i>95% Confidence Interval Upper</i>	57%	48%	56%	62%	69%
<i>95% Confidence Interval Lower</i>	45%	37%	45%	51%	58%
Not-timely Submission	18%	24%	21%	22%	16%
Still admitted	11%	19%	18%	11%	7%
LOA or lapse	17%	11%	9%	8%	10%
Withdrawn	4%	3%	2%	3%	4%
Submission 4.5yrs	65%	61%	66%	73%	75%
Potential completed	96%	97%	98%	97%	96%



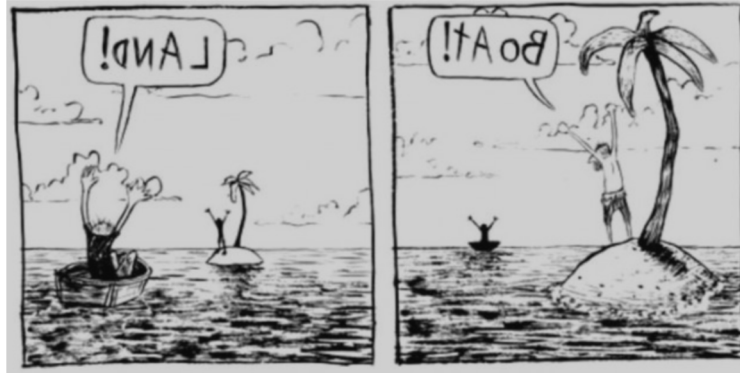
PhD timeline – 3 year degree



Critical role of RHD panel in assessing feasibility early on.
Faculty training, school guidelines



Perspective





What about the student?

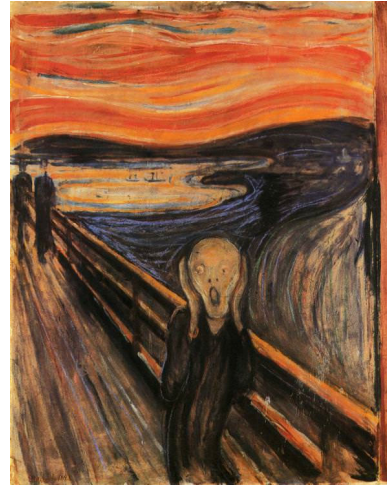
Focus on University and compliance!

Student wellbeing

- Social isolation
- Financial isolation
- Academic isolation

Strategies

- Advisory Chair awareness (EQ>IQ)
- PhD programs
 - Breadth
 - Cohort experience
- Supervisor training
- Improved communication with UoM
 - Newsletter
 - Social media





GR wellbeing survey 2018



Respondents by faculty

In total, 1359 respondents (27% response rate) => **1102** met inclusion criteria (22%)

- 92.5% PhD; 1.3% other doctorate; 2.7% M.Phil; 3.5% other research masters
- 85.1% fulltime

Faculty	n	Study sample	Total GR population
ABP	24	2.2%	2.5%
Arts	144	13.1%	11.2%
FBE	14	1.3%	2.0%
MDHS	379	34.4%	34.5%
MGSE	71	6.4%	7.3%
Melb Law School	25	2.3%	2.2%
Melb School of Engineering	144	13.1%	14.5%
Science	136	12.3%	13.7%
FFAM	26	2.4%	6.9%
FVAS	48	4.4%	4.8%

(Chi Baik, preliminary findings)

13



Stressors in graduate research

Causes of stress

Situational stressors	Agree/ Strongly agree %
Financial strain	52.2
English language difficulties	14.2
Worry about job prospects	72.1

Psychological stress across faculties

Overall DASS:	Overall N=1102	ABP n = 24	Arts n = 144	FBE n = 14	MDHS n = 379	MGSE n = 71	Law n = 25	MSE n = 144	Science n = 136	FFAM n = 26	FVAS n = 48
Normal or mild	52.4%	41.7%	47.9%	53.8%	57.1%	64.3%	66.7%	47.1%	45.7%	48.0%	44.4%
Moderate	21.7%	16.7%	21.1%	0.0%	18.3%	20.0%	16.7%	26.8%	28.7%	20.0%	33.3%
Severe+	25.9%	41.7%	31.0%	46.2%	24.5%	15.7%	16.7%	26.1%	25.6%	32.0%	22.2%

(Chi Baik, preliminary findings)

14



What about the supervisor?

Increasing disengagement

- Honorary staff, off campus....

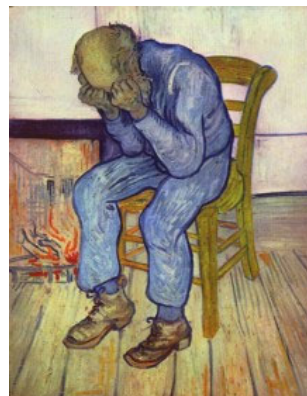
Supervisor training NOT compliance

Supervisor wellbeing

- Difficult student
- Isolation

Strategies

- Advisory Chair awareness (EQ>IQ)
- Supervisor teams
- Formal Education and Training (will include some compliance)
- Mentoring (Advisory Chair, other)
- Improve communication and *dialogue*
- Support for student and project (statistical etc)





Solutions proposed by graduate researchers

What do graduate researchers suggest?

595 graduate researchers made 886 recommendations

Preliminary analysis reveals several key themes:

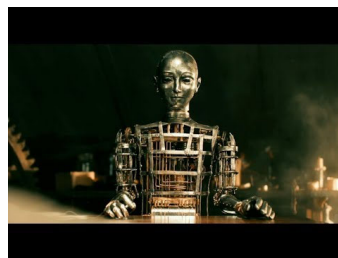
- Encourage/facilitate peer engagement and networking
 - Improve supervision practice (and quality of supervisors)
 - Foster a welcoming and supportive (not competitive) culture and community
 - More understanding of pressures faced by GRs
 - Improve mental health services and support for GRs
- PhD Programs
Supervisor TRAINING
Preconfirmation
Advisory Chair



What is an Advisory Chair?

NOT

- NOT a supervisor
- NOT part of supervisory team
- NOT a content expert
- NOT solely an administrator
- NOT an automaton



7



What is an Advisory Chair?

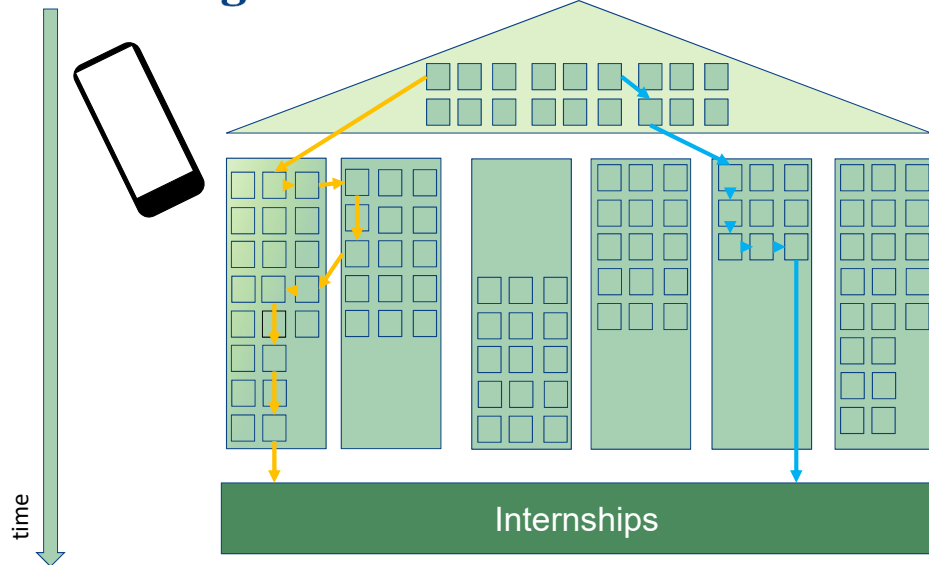
IS

- Responsible for conduct of Advisory Committee
 - Delegated **authority** from Head of Dept/School (*seniority*)
- High level oversight of candidates progress
- Mediator
- *Mentor* (to student and to Supervisor)
- Advisor (into best practice)





PhD Programs





Panel

Emily Crisafulli
James Ziogas
Keely Bumstead O'Brien
Rob Hester



Thank you

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