CASS HDR Coursework Frequently Asked Questions

Why are HDR students required to do coursework?
Formal HDR coursework provides academic and methodological training at the highest level in order to qualify candidates for dissertation work or equivalent; ensure adequate diversity in the candidate’s scholarly competence; and provide the support and structure required for students to complete high quality PhDs within a reasonable time frame. Coursework will help students meet major milestones, and assessment is designed to contribute directly to the PhD or related activities. Some courses will require students to generate material for the Thesis Proposal Review (TPR), while others offer knowledge and skills development opportunities ranging from thesis chapter writing workshops, to developing a conference paper or journal article, while still others focus on the acquisition of more fundamental skills or prepare students for careers in the higher education sector.

Is the coursework compulsory for all CASS HDR students?
Yes, CASS HDR students commencing on or after the 1st January 2011 are required to complete 24 units of coursework (usually equivalent to 4 courses).
If students have completed the same or similar courses as part of a previous degree, or believe they have substantial research experience prior to commencing their program at ANU, they can request an exemption from one or more courses. All exemptions require approval from the Associate Dean (Research Training).

Exemptions should first be discussed with your Chair of Panel/supervisory panel. If there is agreement that it is appropriate to seek an exemption, you must provide a written statement outlining your reasons. This should then be endorsed by your Chair of Panel and Head of School/Centre before being forwarded to the CASS Student and Education Office (either hard copy or electronic) to seek approval from the Associate Dean (Research Training).
Note that students who commenced in 2011 (the pilot year of the program) are able to opt out of the coursework requirement following the same procedures as for exemption.

What will this cost students?
Domestic (RTS) and International students on scholarship/sponsorship will not be charged additional fees for HDR coursework courses. Self funded (i.e. tuition fee paying) international students will be charged depending on their enrolment. Please note that any coursework enrolment added to a semester/session reduces the overall research block code enrolment load, so that your enrolment will always be 48 units of credit for full-time students, or 24 units of credit for part-time students, in a calendar year.

Can I take courses outside of my discipline/field of study?
Yes, however you should only enrol in a course after discussion with your Chair of Panel/supervisory panel. It may be appropriate for you to take a course from another School/Centre/College.
The courses listed in the CASS HDR guide are given as examples only; each student’s coursework should be tailored to meet the needs of their individual research project.
Students enrolling in courses from another area should contact the convenor of that course to seek permission before completing an Application for Enrolment Change.

Will the courses be graded?
Courses created specifically for this program will be assessed on a pass/fail basis, with students receiving a grade of CRS (course requirement satisfied) when they pass. Courses not created specifically for this program (i.e. standard graduate courses undertaken by Graduate Certificate and Masters students) may be graded.
How will the courses be assessed and structured?
Many of the courses are designed to be flexible, with assessment tasks set by your supervisor and no formal contact hours. Others are structured as postgraduate coursework courses, and have required class contact hours with assessment marked by the course convener. For information relevant to each particular course please refer to its listing on Programs and Courses.

Will my results be formally recorded?
Yes, results are recorded formally on your ANU transcript. You can view your enrolment and results (as well as details of your research program, milestones and supervisory panel) on ISIS at any time. A record and description of the courses will also be included in the AHEGS statement you receive upon completion of your degree, so that you can demonstrate evidence of formal research skills training.

Will the length of the thesis be reduced?
No, as the coursework component is designed to support students in their research and formalise work which would already be done (for example ethics clearance), there is no need for the dissertation to be shortened.

When should coursework be undertaken?
While courses can be taken at any time in the PhD program (up to 4 years), it is expected that most students will complete their courses in the first 12-18 months of candidature. The schedule of courses to be taken should be confirmed at the commencement of candidature along with the details of your supervisory panel, and recorded on an Application for Enrolment Change.
When deciding which courses to take, students and supervisors need to consider which courses are best suited to which phase of the PhD program; for example ‘Research Methods and Techniques’ can give structure in the early stages of candidature by assisting with research design and planning, whereas ‘Situating the Thesis’ is valuable preparation for the Thesis Proposal Review.
Please note that not all courses will be offered in all semesters.

How do I enrol in my coursework?
HDR students are not able to enrol themselves in coursework on ISIS. Any courses you wish to enrol in must be listed on an Application for Enrolment Change (available on our Resources for Current HDR Students page: http://cass.anu.edu.au/current-students/hdr) which is signed by your Chair of Panel as DA1. Your School/Centre administrator can then arrange approval by your Head of School/Centre as DA2, and pass it on to our Student Administration and Records Office for processing.
If you are planning to participate in a course with formal contact hours, your Application for Enrolment Change should be submitted well in advance of the start date of the course. If you are enrolling in a course offered by a School/Centre other than your own (not including ‘ARTS’ coded courses such as ARTS8101), or through another College within the ANU, approval to enrol from the course convenor should be indicated either by their name and signature on the Application for Enrolment Change, or in an attached email.

What if I am unable to complete my research program?
If you are unable to complete your research program for any reason, and have successfully completed 24 units of compulsory coursework, you may be eligible to graduate with another qualification.

Course descriptions for all CASS graduate courses can be found on Program and Courses http://programsandcourses.anu.edu.au/Catalogue Links to courses specifically designed for research students are included in the annual CASS HDR student guide.