



Higher Degree by Research (Recommendations 5 to 9)

The following information provides further detail on the planned Knight Review changes to the student visa program.

Frequently asked questions

What Knight Review changes affect Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students?

To recognise the importance and contribution of overseas HDR students, a number of changes will assist the HDR sector including:

- streamlined processing of HDR visas
- unlimited work rights for subclass 574 (Post Graduate Research Sector) visa holders once the course leading to the award of a Masters by Research or Doctorate degree has commenced
- an increase to the visa period of all new HDR visa grants by six months to allow for the interactive marking of a thesis.

In addition, the government proposes to give HDR students access to a three or four year post-study work visa.

Which students are classified as HDR students?

HDR students are students undertaking Masters by research and PhD studies. Overseas students are required to obtain Postgraduate Research (subclass 574) visas in order to undertake HDR study in Australia. Some students may also study an HDR course on a subclass 576 (AusAID/Defence sector) visa. Subclass 576 students are not included in the changes listed above.

Streamlined processing

What is streamlined processing?

From 24 March 2012, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (the department) will assess HDR student visa applicants with a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) from a participating university as though they were lower migration risk (similar to the current Assessment Level 1), regardless of their country of origin.

Where can I get more information on streamlined processing?

Information on streamlining arrangements for the university sector is available.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/pdf/2011-university-sector-streamlined-processing.pdf

Post study work visa

What is the post study work visa proposal?

The government proposes to introduce a:

- three year post-study work visa for Masters by Research graduates
- four year post-study work visa for Doctoral degree graduates.

More information on this change is available.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/pdf/2011-university-sector-post-study-work-visa.pdf

HDR student work conditions

What has changed regarding HDR students' work conditions?

From 26 March 2012, HDR students have unlimited work rights once their Masters by Research or Doctorate course has commenced. Work rights for dependants have not changed. That is, dependants have unlimited work rights once the student has commenced their Masters or Doctorate course.

This change is designed to encourage HDR students to take up employment opportunities which may be closely related to their research.

What are the work conditions for a subclass 574 visa holder when a preliminary course is packaged with the HDR course?

Some subclass 574 visa holders may package a preliminary course such as English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) with the HDR course. Work rights for any preliminary courses are up to 40 hours per fortnight. Once the HDR course commences the subclass 574 visa holder has unlimited work rights.

What are the work conditions for HDR students with subclass 576 (AusAID/Defence sector) visas?

The work conditions for subclass 576 visa holders are up to 40 hours per fortnight once their course commences. Subclass 576 visa holders are not included in the unlimited work rights change listed above.

While sponsored trainees on a subclass 576 visa have work rights, it is a Defence condition that trainees are **not** permitted to work. AusAID sponsored trainees have a two year return home requirement placed on their subclass 576 visa. The circumstances under which AusAID and Defence sector trainees come to study in Australia are different to the majority of international students and so they have not been given unlimited work rights.

Increase to the visa period of all HDR visas by six months

I am applying for a Postgraduate Research (subclass 574) visa. How does the visa period change affect me?

From 5 November 2011, all new Postgraduate Research (subclass 574) visa recipients will be given an additional six months on the length of their visa on top of what is normally granted.

Students will still need to make sure they have Overseas Health Cover (OSHC) for the duration of their stay, including the additional stay period.

Why increase the visa period of all new HDR visa grants by six months?

This flexible approach supports these students during the interactive marking period which research students must undertake to complete their studies. These students no longer have to apply for a further student visa and pay a further visa application charge to extend their stay.

The following table shows how this change affects visa expiry dates, depending on the course's duration.

Duration of course	Duration of visa
Longer than 10 months, finishing at the end of the Australian academic year (November – December)	The visa will usually be granted to September 15 of the following year. This is to allow an extra six months from March 15 (which is the normal expiry date for student visas granted under these circumstances).
Longer than 10 months (finishing January - October)	The visa will usually be granted for eight months longer than the duration of the course. This is to allow an extra six months on top of the two months that is normally granted for a student visa under these circumstances.
10 months or less	The visa will usually be granted for seven months longer than the duration of the course. This is to allow an extra six months on top of the one month that is normally granted for a student visa under these circumstances.

I currently hold a Postgraduate Research (subclass 574) visa that I applied for before 5 November 2011. Will the six months extension affect me?

No. This change only affects Postgraduate Research (subclass 574) visas that were granted on or after 5 November 2011. Students who were granted their subclass 574 visa before 5 November 2011 will need to apply for another visa before their current visa ceases. They will also need to provide evidence (from their education provider) in their application that they require further stay for interactive marking purposes.

Where do I go for more information?

More information will be provided on the department's website as it becomes available.

See: www.immi.gov.au/students/knight/