

# Terms of Reference

## QAAFI Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Committee

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this “Terms of reference” is to set the objectives, describe roles and responsibilities and set the principles and procedures for the governance of the QAAFI HDR Committee.

### 2. Overarching objective and mission

The overarching objective of the QAAFI HDR Committee is to assist the community of QAAFI HDR students and advisors in achieving positive outcomes during each HDR program. The Committee will engage in student recruitment, evaluation of scholarships and other student award applications, oversee progress of each individual HDR program including milestone guidance and evaluation, support in advisory/mentorship roles including the well-being of staff and students, informing about and implementing updates in HDR policies and procedures in collaboration with the Graduate School, and providing feedback on behalf of QAAFI to the Graduate School relevant to the Institute’s HDR community.

### 3. Committee Composition

The Committee will consist of:

- 1- The Chair or QAAFI Director of Higher Degree by Research (DHDR) who is nominated by the QAAFI Executive Team, and confirmed by the Graduate School. The Chair will be appointed for three years with an option to be re-appointed for a second term of three years.
- 2- Four Centre representatives (one for each Centre: Crop, Horticulture, Nutrition and Food and Animal Sciences). The appointment of each Centre representative will be the responsibility of the Centre Director. In principle and in agreement with the Centre Directors, the duration of the service is of three years with an option to be re-appointed for a second term of three years.
- 3- One Early- or Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) representative. The member appointed as EMCR representative will be selected by the QAAFI EMCR association. The duration of the appointment is of two years with a potential re-appointment of a second term of two years.
- 4- One QAAFI HDR student representative. The member appointed as HDR student representative will be selected by the QAAFI Student Association. The duration of the appointment is of one year with a potential re-appointment of a second year.
- 5- One QAAFI HDR Liaison Officer (HLO). The HLO is designated by the Graduate School.

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An updated list of Members of the QAAFI HDR Committee is shown in APPENDIX I. The APPENDIX I should be updated anytime there is a change in Committee members.

### 3.1 Acting Chair

If the designated Chair is not available for a meeting or a period of time (personal leave, etc.), the Chair can appoint an Acting Chair, from the substantive (non-proxy) Committee Members, responsible for convening and conducting the meeting/s and other roles of the DHDR during the designated period. The Acting Chair is responsible for informing the Chair as to the salient points/decisions raised or agreed to at that/those meeting/s.

### 3.2 Proxies

Members of the Committee can send proxies to meetings. The selection of proxies should be agreed with Centre Directors and/or EMCR/Student Association groups. QAAFI HDR Committee members will inform the Chair if they intend to send a proxy from their Centre to a meeting, no less than two business days before the scheduled meeting. The Chair/HLO will inform the HDR Committee of any Acting Member attending a meeting at least 24 hours in advance.

### 3.3 Observers

Members of the Committee have the right to propose to the QAAFI HDR Committee Chair the invitation of Observers to attend one or more meetings. However, it is at the discretion of the Chair to invite the Observers. An invited Observer will be able to attend the meeting, communicate opinions and participate in the discussion when/if asked by the Chair but will not have voting rights. The Chair should inform the HDR Committee of any Observers attending a meeting at least 24 hours in advance.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities of the Committee Members

The QAAFI HDR Committee has the role of providing effective leadership, oversight and guidance of the HDR program of the Institute and serves (via the Committee Chair) to make recommendations to the QAAFI Management Committee and Institute Director.

In particular, the specific roles of Committee members are to:

- a. Actively participate in regular meetings through attendance, discussion, and review of minutes, agenda and papers in advance of the meeting.
- b. Contribute to specific task groups relevant to the QAAFI HDR Program as requested/approved by the Committee.
- c. Understand, communicate and where appropriate implement the policies and procedures of the UQ HDR program.
- d. Contribute to HDR student recruitment initiatives developed by the Graduate School and foster additional Institute-specific recruiting programs, in collaboration with the QAAFI management team.
- e. Act as advocates (or champions) of the QAAFI HDR Committee within QAAFI and across UQ.

### 4.1 QAAFI HDR Committee meeting schedule

The HDR Committee will have regular meetings at least on a quarterly basis. The Chair may also call Special Meetings in addition to the scheduled meetings to enable necessary decision making processes to function in a timely way. Special meetings will be scheduled and held in such a way to enable both physical and remote attendance (five days' notice should be provided where possible with a minimum of two days where the five-day mark is not an option). Papers will be distributed by email at least two working days prior to the special meeting to enable review time by the members.

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### 4.2 Specific Responsibilities of the Chair

The QAAFI HDR Committee Chair is specifically responsible for the following:

- a. Leading and directing activities of the Committee including calling for special meetings when required.
- b. Representing and supporting the Committee at a QAAFI Management level.
- c. In collaboration with the QAAFI HLO, milestone extensions, interruptions, advisory team membership, examiners, and other HDR program related matters.
- d. Ensuring the effectiveness of the QAAFI HDR Committee.
- e. Being the primary interface between the QAAFI HDR Committee and QAAFI Management with the Graduate School.
- f. With the HLO, setting the agenda for each meeting and ensuring that the agenda and supporting materials are sent to Committee members in advance of meetings.
- g. Managing each meeting to ensure its stated objectives are achieved and the agenda items are sufficiently covered within the time allocated.
- h. Ensuring that proper minutes of the meetings are kept by the QAAFI HLO and all action items are clearly identified and followed up to completion.

### 4.3 Specific Responsibilities of the Centre Representatives

QAAFI HDR Centre Representatives are responsible for the following:

- a. Actively participate in the Scholarship Rankings (see section 5.2) for each round and other extraordinary meetings when called by the Chair
- b. Pro-actively assist the HDR and advisory cohorts of QAAFI with particular emphasis on the students and advisors of the Centre they represent, including the provision of advice (on academic procedures including milestones and thesis requirements), direction and acting as first point of contact for their Centre

### 4.4 Specific Responsibilities of the Committee Secretary

The role of Committee Secretary will be filled by the QAAFI HLO. The Committee Secretary will be responsible for:

- a. Organizing the logistics of meetings (including online links or room bookings for remote or in person meetings, respectively)
- b. Sending agendas at least 48 hours before each meeting
- c. Writing and distributing the minutes of each meeting no later than 5 working days after the meeting
- d. Keeping all the members of the QAAFI HDR Committee informed on all matters relevant to their role

## 5. Scholarship Sub-Committee: Composition and role

The ranking of candidates for UQ HDR scholarships will proceed as described in this section. The ranking of student candidates for travel, and other HDR student awards is the responsibility of other QAAFI Committees.

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### 5.1 Scholarship Sub-Committee composition

The Scholarship Committee will consist of:

- 1- The Chair of the QAAFI HDR Committee
- 2- The Four Centre representatives of the QAAFI HDR Committee
- 3- The QAAFI HLO (a non-voting member)

### 5.2 Scholarship Sub-Committee role

The main role of the Scholarship Sub-Committee is to review the information relevant to each HDR candidate to UQ scholarship and travel, and other HDR student awards. In particular, following the request of the UQ Graduate School, each round of international and domestic scholarships require enrolling units such as QAAFI to rank candidates and submit the top candidates to the Graduate School for final assessment. The number of candidates that each enrolling unit puts forward will be designated by the Graduate School and may change for each round. The role of the QAAFI Scholarship Sub-Committee is to rank the QAAFI student candidates based on merit compared with opportunity and decide which candidates are to be put forward for consideration at the Graduate School level for each round. The Committee has the duty to evaluate the HDR applications with a holistic view including the context of the call (e.g. number of scholarships awarded in each round) and balancing the opportunities across different QAAFI research groups when appropriate. The latter will be particularly considered when the number of scholarships available announced by the Graduate School experience significant restrictions.

The ranking methodology for each scholarship round will be as follows:

- a. A guideline highlighting the main objective criteria to evaluate student candidates will be used by all the members of the Committee
- b. The QAAFI HLO will send the list of prospective candidates and the access (link) to all the relevant information about the candidates, at least one week prior to the meeting of the sub-Committee
- c. Each member with voting rights will be asked to submit their ranking at least one day before the final meeting to establish the QAAFI ranking
- d. Each member of the Scholarship Sub-Committee will have a vote on the ranking of each candidate except when the Member is part of the advisory team (see "Conflicts of interest" under section on 6.2)
- e. The QAAFI HLO has no voting right
- f. The final QAAFI ranking for each round will be guided by the average scores and the ranking submitted by the Sub-Committee members. However, it is recognized that divergent rankings are often provided and a final decision will be made after discussion and the emergence of a consensus
- g. In circumstances where the quota for scholarship nominations is small and students are evenly rated based on merit
- h. Other factors may be taken into consideration such as the number of students being nominated by the same advisor, research group or Centre

### 5.3 Scholarship Sub-Committee meeting schedule

The Scholarship Sub-Committee will have scheduled meetings in a timely manner around the UQ scholarship rounds (international and domestic). The Members of the Subcommittee will have access to all the relevant documentation of the scholarship candidates at least one week before the scheduled meeting.

## 6. Quorum, Conflicts of Interest and Decision-making

This section outlines how the QAAFI HDR Committee will make decisions and the minimum number of members (or quorum) required for a decision to be valid.

### 6.1 Quorum

A minimum number of 4 QAAFI HDR Committee members (or proxies) are required to attend the meeting for the validation of decisions. It is the responsibility of the Chair to delay the voting evaluation of candidates until the minimum quorum has been fulfilled. In the event that one or more of the members declare a conflict of interest (see next section 6.2) the scoring of any candidate will be valid only if at least 3 members have been able to vote. The Chair (not Acting Chair) must be present for any meeting that involves the section of Candidates.

### 6.2 Conflict of interest

When a member of the Sub-Committee is listed as a potential member of the advisory team of the student, it is compulsory that the Member declares to the rest of the Committee that a Conflict of Interest exists indicating the name/s of the candidates affected, before voting considerations start. A Member with a Conflict of Interest must not rank the student affected by the Conflict nor participate in discussions that may directly affect the final ranking of the conflicted candidate. However, any member with a Conflict of Interest is allowed to rank the rest of the candidates. In the case of the student/s affected, the final mark used for ranking will be averaged accordingly.

### 6.3 Decision-making Process

QAAFI HDR Committee decisions and approvals will require support from more than 50% of the voting members who attend the meeting.

In the case that the voting is even the Chair will facilitate a discussion prior to a second voting round on the item to be approved. If the 2<sup>nd</sup> round is still even, the vote of the Chair will be considered decisive. This applies to every general item discussed by the QAAFI HDR Committee or the Scholarship Sub-Committee such as (but not limited to) student rankings.

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## 7. APPENDIX I

QAAFI HDR Committee updated to October 2023.

Name	Role in Committee	Substantive Position
Daniel Cozzolino	Chair	Director Higher Degrees by Research
Karine Chenu	Member	Centre Rep (CCS)
Andrew Geering	Member	Centre Rep (CHS)
Shahram Niknafs	Member	Centre Rep (CNAFS)
Luis Prada da Silva	Member	Centre Rep (CAS)
Abedin Abdallah	Member	QAAFI Student Rep
Lilia Carvalhais	Member	QAAFI Early to Mid-Career Res. Rep
Phani Kumari Paritala	Member	QAAFI HDR liaison officer

Version : 0002  
Custodian: QAAFI Higher Degree by Researcher Director  
Contact: Daniel Cozzolino  
Approved by: QAAFI Management Team  
Date: 15 November 2023

Endorsed 23/11/2023:

Professor Matthew Morell, QAAFI Director