

MINOR THESIS POLICY



Approved by Academic Board: 9 November 2018

Revised by Academic Board: 12 April 2019

Related documents

Appeals Policy and Procedures

Assessment Policy

Australian Qualifications Framework

Regulations 7, 9, 22, 38

1. Rationale and Objectives

1.1 The Minor Thesis provides training for students in development of research skills and tests their capacity to undertake research. It may serve as a pathway into higher degrees by research.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to applicants for the Minor Thesis, to students admitted to a Minor Thesis and to their supervisors and examiners.

3. Principles

3.1 The University is committed to ensuring that its students have opportunity to develop and test their capacity for research.

3.2 The University ensures that students undertaking an initial piece of research in the form of a Minor Thesis receive effective support through supervision arrangements.

3.3 The University promotes quality in research and experience of peer review processes through a robust examination process for the Minor Thesis.

4. Definitions

4.1 A Minor Thesis is a substantial piece of work that provides a student with the opportunity to develop and test the capacity for research. The Minor Thesis:

- a) demonstrates a contribution to knowledge through investigation of its subject and the presentation of original research or independent analysis;
- b) is a Postgraduate Elective unit of study worth 48 points;
- c) is 16,000 words in length, inclusive of all elements except the bibliography;
- d) may be presented in a format other than a written essay but equivalent to it, provided that permission for an alternative form of presentation is sought and granted when the topic of the Minor Thesis is approved;
- e) is recorded on the student's academic record as "Minor Thesis 16,000 words".

5. Enrolment

- 5.1 The Minor Thesis may be completed in a single semester or in two consecutive semesters.
- 5.2 The Minor Thesis may be taken as a single unit or as part of a postgraduate award.
- 5.3 A person may apply to a College of the University to enrol in the Minor Thesis if that person is eligible to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Divinity.
- 5.4 Permission to enrol in the Minor Thesis may be granted by a College of the University.

6. Supervisor

- 6.1 To be eligible for appointment as a supervisor of a Minor Thesis a person must:
 - a) hold a doctoral degree or have equivalent research experience; and
 - b) be active in research and publishing in, or otherwise make original contributions to, a relevant field or discipline; and
 - c) attend a research supervisors' training event at least once every three years.
- 6.2 The supervisor is responsible for:
 - a) designing the learning outcomes for the Minor Thesis;
 - b) meeting regularly with the student during enrolment in the Minor Thesis;
 - c) ensuring that the student is making satisfactory progress towards the approved learning outcomes for the Minor Thesis;
 - d) advising the Research Coordinator of the student's home College immediately if there is any reason to believe the student is at risk of unsatisfactory progress.
- 6.3 If the supervisor is not a member of academic staff of the University of Divinity, the Research Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor understands the requirements of this Policy and is accountable to the University for its implementation.
- 6.4 The supervisor must meet with the candidate (whether face-to-face or by telephone, electronic, or other means) to discuss the candidate's research project at least six times.

7. Approval

- 7.1 The student or applicant for the Minor Thesis is assisted by the Research Coordinator of a College in preparation of a topic and identification of a suitable supervisor who meets the requirements of this Policy.
- 7.2 The student or application must be provided with a copy of Schedule A: Minor Thesis Grading Criteria.
- 7.3 The student must complete a Minor Thesis Approval Form in conjunction with the supervisor. The form must include an outline of the topic to be researched and propose measurable learning outcomes.

- 7.4 The Minor Thesis Approval Form must be lodged with the Research Office no later than the census date of the semester in which the essay is to be commenced. If the Minor Thesis Approval Form is not received by the census date, the student's enrolment in the Minor Thesis may be cancelled by the Director of Research and any fees refunded.
- 7.5 On receipt of the Minor Thesis Approval Form, the Director of Research:
- a) confirms the form is complete;
 - b) confirms the proposed supervisor meets the requirements of this Policy;
 - c) assigns the Minor Thesis Approval Form to a Deputy Chair of Examiners; and
 - d) forwards the form to that Deputy Chair of Examiners for approval or amendment.
- 7.6 Where the Director of Research or the Deputy Chair of Examiners proposes amendment of the Minor Thesis Approval Form, the Research Office liaises with the college Course Coordinator until the Director of Research and Deputy Chair of Examiners approve the proposed supervisor and topic.
- 7.7 The Research Office notifies the student, supervisor and College Registrar when the Minor Thesis has been approved, and notifies the Research Committee of the approved topic and the name of the student and approved supervisor.

8. Ethics Clearance

- 8.1 Where the Minor Thesis requires research involving human subjects, or material not in the public domain, the student must submit an application to the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing research.
- 8.2 The Human Research Ethics Committee reviews the proposal through an expedited process conducted by the Director of Research and two other members of the Human Research Ethics Committee.
- 8.3 The outcome of an expedited process must be reported to the next meeting of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

9. Submission and Extensions

- 9.1 The Minor Thesis must be submitted to the Research Office no later than the last day of the examination period of the semester in which it is due.
- 9.2 The Minor Thesis must be submitted electronically as either a Word document or a PDF through the Minor Thesis unit in the Learning Management System (ARK).
- 9.3 A student who, through unforeseen circumstances (as defined in the Assessment Policy), is unable to submit the Minor Thesis by the due date may apply for a Dean's Extension.
- 9.4 A Dean's Extension for a Minor Thesis:
- a) may be for a period of up to four weeks
 - b) may only be granted by the Academic Dean of the student's home College

- c) must be applied for in writing on the form approved as Schedule D to the Assessment Policy
- d) must include any evidence required to support the claim
- e) may only be granted so as not to advantage or disadvantage a student.

9.5 The outcome of an application for a Dean's Extension for a Minor Thesis must be reported to the student, the supervisor, the Research Coordinator and Registrar of the student's home College, and the Director of Research and, where applicable, be recorded on the student record system.

9.6 A Minor Thesis submitted after the due date must have a reduced grade recorded in accordance with the provisions for late penalties in the Assessment Policy.

10. Examinations

10.1 The Director of Research appoints two persons as examiners of the Minor Thesis after consultation with the supervisor and a Deputy Chair of Examiners, provided that:

- a) A student or supervisor may request in writing that a particular person not be appointed as an examiner;
- b) the supervisor of a Minor Thesis may not be appointed as an examiner of that Minor Thesis;
- c) at least one examiner must be a member of a College of the University that is not a College with which the student or supervisor is associated.

10.2 No examiner is permitted to communicate with the student or supervisor in relation to the examination during the examination process. If such communication occurs, the Director of Research may remove the examiner and appoint a new examiner.

10.3 One copy of the Minor Thesis is provided in confidence to each examiner together with Schedule A: Minor Thesis Grading Criteria, the approved copy of Schedule B: Minor Thesis Approval Form, and Schedule C: Minor Thesis Examination Report Form. Each examiner must return the completed Minor Thesis Examination Report Form to the Research Office within three weeks of receipt of the Minor Thesis.

10.4 If an examiner does not return a signed, completed Minor Thesis Examination Report to the Research Office within three weeks, then the Director of Research may dismiss the examiner and appoint a new examiner.

10.5 The Research Office forwards the completed Minor Thesis Examination Reports for each Minor Thesis to a Deputy Chair of Examiners who is responsible for determination of the final grade, provided that:

- a) No essay may be failed unless failed by two examiners;
- b) If the Deputy Chair of Examiners is unable to make a clear determination the Deputy Chair may ask the examiners to consult or ask the Director of Research to appoint an additional examiner;

- c) If the two examiners' grades are two grade bands or more apart, the Director of Research must appoint a third examiner who is external to the College of the University with which the student, supervisor, and both previous examiners are associated.

- 10.6 Where an additional or third examiner is appointed, that examiner's report is forwarded to the Deputy Chair of Examiners who then determines the final grade of the Minor Thesis. The Deputy Chair of Examiners has discretion in such cases to determine which of the examiners' reports are to be released to the student.
- 10.7 The Chair of Examiners must convene a meeting of the Deputy Chairs of Examiners once in each examination period for the purpose of comparison and moderation of results of the Minor Thesis. The meeting may amend the result of a Minor Thesis to ensure consistency of examination and grading of assessment, provided that the requirements of section 10.5 of this Policy are met.
- 10.8 On completion of the examination, the Research Office forwards the final grade (and no other) and approved examiners' reports (ensuring these reports do not include a grade other than the final grade) to the student, supervisor, Research Coordinator and Registrar of the student's College. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, this is to occur no later than the date on the University Calendar on which results are released to students for that semester.
- 10.9 A student who has successfully completed a Minor Thesis may lodge an electronic copy of the Minor Thesis in the University's Research Repository.

11. Review and Appeal

- 11.1 A student may apply for a review of the final grade recorded for a Minor Thesis by lodging a completed Appeal Notification Form with the Director of Research within five working days of receipt of notice of the final grade.
- 11.2 If the Director of Research is an examiner or a supervisor of the Minor Thesis then the Director of Research must delegate the review to another member of academic staff at the University who is not an examiner or supervisor of the Minor Thesis.
- 11.3 The Director of Research must acknowledge receipt of the review request in writing to the student within five working days.
- 11.4 The Director of Research must provide a report and decision on the review in writing to the student, the Chair of Examiners, and the University Secretary within ten working days of receipt of the review request. If the final grade has been amended the Director of Research must ensure the new grade is recorded on the student's record.
- 11.5 A student may have recourse to the Appeals Policy to dispute the outcome of the review of the final grade if the student is able to provide evidence of failure to comply with this Policy.

12. Fees and payments

- 12.1 The student tuition fee for the Minor Thesis is collected by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.

12.2 Payments to Colleges, libraries, and examiners are distributed by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor from the student tuition fee according to the formula and schedule used for higher degrees by research.

12.3 Colleges are responsible for arranging payment, where appropriate, of supervisors of the Minor Thesis.

13. Schedules

13.1 Schedule A to this Policy is the Minor Thesis Grading Criteria which may be approved or amended by the Research Committee.

13.2 Schedule B to this Policy is the Minor Thesis Approval Form which may be approved or amended by the Director of Research.

13.3 Schedule C to this Policy is the Minor Thesis Examination Report Form which may be approved or amended by the Director of Research.

14. Transitional Provisions

14.1 This policy replaces the Research Essay Policy (approved by the Academic Board on 23 November 2012 and last amended on 1 June 2018) with effect from 1 January 2019. Students who commenced a Research Essay of 12,000 words prior to 31 December 2018 are permitted to complete the Research Essay under the Research Essay Policy no later than 30 June 2019.

15. Date of next review

15.1 This policy must be reviewed no later than 31 December 2021.

SCHEDULE A: Minor Thesis Grading Criteria

Approved by the Research Committee, October 2018



The Grading Criteria are intended to be read in conjunction with the specific learning outcomes of the Minor Thesis as recorded in the approved Minor Thesis Approval Form.

The University of Divinity Minor Thesis may serve as a pathway into higher degrees by research. Minor Thesis work is not expected to make an original contribution, but the work should do more than summarise the opinions of others.

Skills and Capacity

1. The Minor Thesis demonstrates knowledge of the existing body of literature and capacity with the fundamental tools and skills appropriate to the subject area (for example, biblical languages, methods, terminology, archival research, etc.).
2. The Minor Thesis evidences the capacity for critical analysis, including the accurate representation of the range of appropriate positions and an evaluation or interpretation of these positions in relation to the research question.

Content and Structure

3. The Minor Thesis establishes a clear and discernible research question appropriate to the word limit and a finding or set of findings.
4. The Minor Thesis has a clear and discernible structure (including appropriate section headings), demonstrating mastery over the material by organising it in relation to the research question.
5. The methodology employed is appropriate to the research question, well described, and demonstrated through the Minor Thesis.
6. The bibliography demonstrates appropriateness to the research question, including its use of primary and secondary materials.
7. The Minor Thesis communicates well, with evidence of good writing such as topic sentences and headings indicative of the content, is free from obvious grammatical and stylistic errors, and is consistent in following the chosen referencing and bibliographical style.

SCHEDULE B: MINOR THESIS APPROVAL FORM
 Revised by the Director of Research, 21 August 2019



*This form must be submitted to the UD Director of Research **no later than the census date** of the semester in which the student will begin the thesis. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain signatures from all relevant authorities prior to submission of the form.*

Student information

Student details			
Name of student		College	UD ID
Name of UD course			
Minor Thesis enrolment			
Duration	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 semester	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 semesters
Supervisor			
Name		Supervisor's college	

Minor Thesis

Assessment: One 16,000-word **Minor Thesis**

Topic/title <i>(to appear on your transcript)</i>		
Description of the topic		
Learning outcomes <i>(expressed as goals that can be measured)</i>	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
Agreed due date	<i>(No later than the end of the examination week of the relevant semester)</i>	
	/ / (dd/mm/yyyy)	
Resources <i>(classes to audit, special requirements etc)</i>		
Indicative reading list <i>(if necessary, attach a separate sheet)</i>		

Human research

If your research involves human subjects, or use of records not in the public domain, then you will also need to complete a draft HREC application, and include it with this application so that your project's research methodology can be considered for endorsement. A specialist in the discipline of your research will be asked by the Research Coordinator at your College to advise if the proposed methodology is appropriate. It may be that your supervisor is the appropriate specialist. (After this approval, your project will then need to be submitted to HREC.)

Does your research involve human subjects, or use of records not in the public domain?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
If YES, draft HREC application submitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes		

Processing flow from student:

- > Supervisor
- > Research Co-ordinator
- > Director of Research
- > Deputy Chair of Examiners
- > Director of Research

Suggested examiners

To be completed by the supervisor – please provide email contact for examiners.

The Minor Thesis is to be marked independently by two examiners, neither of whom shall be the supervisor. Both examiners may be internal to the university. However, the second examiner must be external to any college of the university with which the supervisor, first examiner or candidate are associated.

Proposed first examiner			
Full name			
Academic qualifications			
College		Position held	
Day phone			
Email			
Proposed second examiner			
Full name			
Academic qualifications			
College		Position held	
Day phone			
Email			
Optional: additional examiner (in case the first or second examiner is unavailable)			
Full name			
Academic qualifications			
College		Position held	
Day phone			
Email			

Approvals

Supervisor			
Supervisor (Name)			
Supervisor (Signature)		Date	/ /
College Research Co-ordinator			
College Research Co-ordinator (Name)			
College Research Co-ordinator (Signature)		Date	/ /
UD Director of Research			
UD Director of Research (Name)	Professor John McDowell		
UD Director of Research (Signature)		Date	/ /
Deputy Chair of Examiners			
Deputy Chair of Examiners (Name)			
Deputy Chair of Examiners (Signature)		Date	/ /

Submission: Please send the completed form to:

The Director of Research, University of Divinity, 29 College Crescent, PARKVILLE VIC 3052. Email: jmcdowell@divinity.edu.au

SCHEDULE C: MINOR THESIS EXAMINATION REPORT FORM

Approved by the Director of Research, 12 November 2018



The University of Divinity Minor Thesis may serve as a pathway into higher degrees by research. Minor Thesis work is not expected to make an original contribution, but the work should do more than summarise the opinions of others.

Student's Name	
Examiner's Name	
Recommended Grade	
Date	

Grading Criteria	Comments
To what extent does the Minor Thesis demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the existing body of literature and capacity with the fundamental tools/skills appropriate to the subject area (e.g., biblical languages, methods, terminology, archival research, etc.)?	
To what extent does the Minor Thesis evidence the capacity for critical analysis, including the accurate representation of the positions argued by the selected positions and an evaluation or interpretation of these positions in relation to the research question?	
To what extent does the Minor Thesis establish a clear and discernible research question appropriate to the word limit, and a finding or set of findings?	
To what extent does the Minor Thesis have a clear and discernible structure (including appropriate section headings), demonstrating mastery over the material by organising it in relation to the research question?	
To what extent is the methodology employed appropriate to the research question, well described, and	

demonstrated through the Minor Thesis?	
To what extent is the bibliography appropriate to the research question, including its use of primary and secondary materials?	
To what extent does the Minor Thesis communicate well, with evidence of good writing such as topic sentences and headings indicative of the content, is free from obvious grammatical and stylistic errors, and is consistent in following the chosen referencing and bibliographical style?	
Any Further Comments	