

HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH EXAMINATION PROCEDURE



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Related documents

Higher Degree by Research Policy

Regulation 11: Awards, Courses and Units

Higher Education Standards Framework section 4.2 Research Training

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018).

The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Staff Policy

Assessment Policy

Support for Students Policy and Procedure

Conflict of Interest Policy

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021: Standard 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment; Standard 4.2 Research Training.

Australian Standards for Editing Practice: Guidelines for editing research theses

School of Graduate Research Guidelines for GenAI in Research

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR ORAL EXAMINATION

- A.** All higher degree by research candidates whose candidature is confirmed after 1 January 2026 are required to undertake an oral examination as part of the thesis examination process.
- B.** Candidates whose candidature was confirmed prior to 1 January 2026 may elect to undertake an oral examination. In such circumstances, the Principal Supervisor must request approval from the School of Graduate Research Committee at the point at which examiners are nominated under 4.2.7.
- C.** For candidates whose candidature was confirmed prior to 1 January 2026 and who have not requested to undertake an oral examination, the School of Graduate Research Committee may require a candidate to undertake an oral examination in particular circumstances, including:

- i) where both examiners recommend revision and resubmission of the thesis, lower award or non-award, in order to give all parties maximum opportunity to explore the body of work submitted for examination;
- ii) where the Chair of Examiners intends to recommend a result of lower award or non-award, but not all examiners' reports have recommended lower award or non-award.

1. Rationale and Objectives

- 1.1 This Procedure establishes the process and requirements for examination of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Theses at the University.
- 1.2 This Procedure ensures that candidates are assessed fairly and appropriately
- 1.3 This Procedure aligns with:
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021: Standard 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment; Standard 4.2 Research Training.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Procedure applies to all HDR Candidates, staff and examiners involved in the examination of a Higher Degree by Research Thesis.

3. Procedures

3.1 Examination Requirements

- 3.1.1 The Higher Degree by Research Examination consists of two components, the examination of the thesis and an oral examination.

3.2 Acceptable thesis formats and compulsory inclusions

- 3.2.1 The thesis may take the form of a typescript, or may be submitted in an alternative format. Alternative theses may include:
 - a) an exegeted research project or report. For doctoral awards, the written exegesis of the project must demonstrate how the project contributes to the production of new knowledge or professional practice, or to a re-evaluation or modification of existing knowledge.
 - b) For doctoral awards only, a publication portfolio and meta-analysis consisting of
 - i) peer-reviewed scholarship previously published or accepted for publication on a central unifying theme within six years prior to the date of submission
 - ii) an original, substantial integrating essay which complies with the specified word limits that demonstrates how the portfolio contributes to the production of new knowledge or to a reevaluation or modification of existing knowledge.
 - c) an exegeted non-traditional research output (NTRO). A durable record of the NTRO must be included.

- 3.2.2 A candidate who wishes to present research findings in an alternative form must obtain permission from the School of Graduate Research Committee prior to confirmation of candidature. The form of the research output must be specified at confirmation of candidature.
- 3.2.3 The thesis must address a significant research question and be the candidate's own work unless permission for co-authored publications which comply with the stipulations of this policy is granted by the School of Graduate Research Committee.
- 3.2.4 Students are expected to keep their thesis within the specified word limit; including footnotes, but excluding bibliography, tables and appendices:

Award	Minimum (where applicable)	Maximum	Other requirements
Master of Philosophy	32,000	40,000	
Master of Philosophy with artefact and exegesis	20,000	32,000	
Doctor of Philosophy	80,000	100,000	
Doctor of Philosophy with artefact and exegesis	50,000	80,000	
Doctor of Philosophy by publication portfolio and meta-analysis	100,000	120,000	Which includes an original, substantial integrating essay of between 10,000 and 50,000 words
Doctor of Professional Practice	52,000	65,000	
Doctor of Professional Practice with artefact and exegesis	40,000	55,000	At least one article accepted in a peer-reviewed publication

Doctor of Philosophy by publication portfolio and meta-analysis	65,000	75,000	Which includes an original, substantial integrating essay of between 10,000 and 35,000 words
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3.2.5 A thesis that exceeds the specified word limit is only to be accepted for examination if:

- a) prior approval has been granted by the chair of Dean of the School of Graduate Research; and
- b) the nominated examiners have agreed to examine the over-length thesis.

3.2.6 Language of the Thesis

- a) The thesis must be written in English unless approval to submit in another language has been granted by the School of Graduate Research Committee on commencement.
- b) A thesis written in a language other than English must contain an English language summary of the thesis including an introduction, chapter outline and conclusion. The length of the English language summary should be 5000 – 10 000 words for a Doctoral Degree (Research) thesis; or 2500 – 5000 words for a Master Degree.

3.2.7 Declarations, statements and acknowledgements

- a) The candidate must complete the Thesis Certification and Submission Form which must be submitted at the same time as thesis.
- b) Any editorial assistance provided to a candidate must be declared in the preface.
- c) Any use of GenAI must be acknowledged, and must be in accordance with the School of Graduate Research Guidelines for GenAI in Research.

3.2.8 Editing the Thesis

- a) The candidate is responsible for editing the thesis
- b) Supervisors will provide the candidate with editorial advice on:
 - i) Substance and structure;
 - ii) Language and illustrations;
 - iii) Completeness and consistency.
- c) Professional editorial intervention must be restricted to copy-editing and proofreading as described in the Australian Standards for Editing Practice:

Guidelines for editing research theses. The principal supervisor will oversee the process and monitor professional proofreading.

3.2.8 Academic Integrity Check

- a) Prior to submitting the thesis for examination, the candidate must submit a Turnitin report of the full thesis to the Principal Supervisor for review.
- b) The candidate and the supervisor must discuss the report and resolve any issues before signing the Thesis Certification and Submission Form.

3.3 Intention to Submit

3.3.1 The candidate and supervisor must notify the University of intention to submit in writing at least one calendar month prior to submission of a thesis.

3.3.2 If the Principal Supervisor withholds approval for examination via the intention to submit form or by email to the Dean of the School of Graduate Research, the candidate may request in writing that the thesis be examined without the principal supervisor's approval. The Dean will consider the candidate's request and may seek further information from the supervisory team, the College Research Coordinator, the candidate, or other parties to make a determination. The Dean will inform the candidate of the outcome. If the thesis is not approved for examination, the candidate may request a Review of Decision in accordance with the [Appeals Policy](#).

4. Examination

4.1 A thesis may only proceed to examination if the Dean of the School of Graduate Research certifies that the candidate has met all other requirements of the course of study as per the requirements of the relevant Course Record and the Higher Degree by Research Policy.

4.1.1 A digital copy of the thesis must be submitted for examination through the Turnitin portal on ARK.

4.2 Board of Examiners

4.2.1 The Board of Examiners for each thesis is appointed by the School of Graduate Research Committee of the Academic Board and consists of a Chair of Examiners and no less than two Examiners.

4.2.3 The Chair of Examiners is a member of academic staff of the University. The Chair of Examiners is responsible for oversight of the examination, assessing the Examiners' reports, and making recommendations to the School of Graduate Research Committee in relation to the conduct and outcome of the examination.

4.2.4 The thesis must be examined by at least two persons external to the University with expertise directly relevant to the subject matter of the thesis and who, in the opinion of the School of Graduate Research Committee, do not have a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in relation to the examination, the thesis, or the candidate.

4.2.5 Examiners must be recognised as international experts in the field or discipline of the thesis and hold a degree at the level they are examining or higher, unless there are

exceptional circumstances that are approved by the School of Graduation Research Committee.

- 4.2.6 No person associated with the candidate either as a supervisor or as a subject of the research may be appointed as an Examiner.
- 4.2.7 The supervisors may nominate Examiners in writing to the School of Graduate Research Committee.
- 4.2.8 A candidate or a supervisor may request in writing that a person not be appointed as an Examiner.
- 4.2.9 The School of Graduate Research Committee must appoint no less than two reserve Examiners authorised to act in the event that an Examiner is unavailable, or that the Chair of Examiners decides a third Examiner is required.
- 4.2.10 If the candidate is not undertaking an oral examination, the identity of the Examiners must not be disclosed to the candidate until the outcome of the examination has been decided by the School of Graduate Research Committee.
- 4.2.11 No Examiner is permitted to communicate with the candidate or supervisor in relation to the examination during the examination process. If such communication occurs, the Chair of Examiners may remove the Examiner from the Board of Examiners and appoint a reserve Examiner as a member of the Board of Examiners.
- 4.3 Examination of Thesis
 - 4.3.1 The role of each Examiner is to make an independent assessment of the thesis against the standards established by the University and to write a report detailing that assessment.
 - 4.3.2 Each Examiner must provide the Chair of Examiners with a preliminary written report on the thesis within three calendar months of receipt of the thesis.
 - 4.3.3 The report must include recommendation of one of the outcomes listed in section 4.6 of this Procedure and specify amendments or revisions (if any) to be made to the thesis.
 - 4.3.4 Where disparate recommendations are made and a reconciled recommendation cannot be made, the School of Graduate Research Committee must appoint a further examiner who has been appropriately nominated and approved. The candidate and supervisory team must be updated on the progress of the examination.
 - 4.3.3 If the recommendation is that the candidate has completed the requirements of the degree conditional on amendments to the thesis being made, the Examiner must specify whether the amendments are to be made to the satisfaction of the Examiner or of the Chair of Examiners.
 - 4.3.5 If an Examiner does not provide a written report and recommendation on the thesis within three calendar months of receipt of the thesis, the Chair of Examiners may remove the Examiner from the Board of Examiners and appoint a reserve Examiner as a member of the Board of Examiners.
 - 4.3.6 If the candidate is not undertaking an Oral Examination, sections 4.4 and 4.5 do not apply.

4.4 Oral Examination Panel

4.4.1 The Oral Examination Panel comprises the Board of Examiners as appointed under 4.2.1.

4.4.2 The Chair of Examiners is the Chair of the Oral Examination Panel. In the event that the Chair of Examiners is unavailable or has a conflict of interest, a Deputy Chair of Examiners may serve as the panel chair, provided they:

- a) are classified as at least Level C.
- b) have experience examining doctoral theses.
- c) are not a supervisor of the candidate under examination, or otherwise have a conflict of interest with the panel or candidate.

4.4.3 If the Chair of Examiners and the candidate are members of the same College of the University, the Dean of the School of Graduate Research must determine whether the Chair of Examiners has a conflict of interest.

4.4.4 One member of the candidate's supervisory team may attend the Oral Examination as an observer, but is not permitted to communicate with the candidate or panel members.

4.5 Oral Examination Process

4.5.1 The Registrar of the School of Graduate Research schedules the Oral Examination. The Oral Examination must occur within three months of the thesis being sent to the Examiners.

4.5.2 Upon receipt of the Examiners' reports as outlined in 4.3.2, the Chair of the Oral Examination Panel confirms the timing and location of the Oral Examination.

4.5.6 If one or both examiners indicate non-award, lower award, or that thesis should be revised and resubmitted for examination, the Chair of Examinations will consult with the examiners as to whether the oral examination should proceed.

4.5.7 The Oral Examination may be held either in person or as a hybrid videoconference, noting that:

- a) The Panel Chair and candidate should be in the same room.
- b) If 4.5.7(a) is not possible, an invigilator approved by the Dean of the School of Graduate Research must be in the same room as the candidate.
- c) For candidates based in Australia, a room at one of the University's campuses should be used, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

4.5.8 At least one week prior to the Oral Examination, the Panel Chair must distribute all reports to the panel members and the candidate. The recommendations from the examiners must not be included in the report sent to the candidate.

4.5.9 Candidates are responsible for preparing for the Oral Examination. Candidates must not share the reports circulated under 4.5.8 with their supervisors, and supervisors must not provide coaching or feedback to the candidate prior to the Oral Examination.

- 4.5.10 At least two days prior to the Oral Examination, the Panel Chair must determine a list of topics for discussion, drawn from the individual Examiners' reports, and circulate these to the Examiners.
- 4.5.11 If an Examiner is unable to attend the Oral Examination they must provide a list of questions or concerns to the Panel Chair in order for the Examination to proceed. If neither Examiner is able to attend, the Oral Examination must be rescheduled.
- 4.5.12 The Oral Examination must be conducted in English.
- 4.5.13 The candidate is permitted to bring the following materials to the Oral Examination, in either print or digital format:
- a) an unannotated copy of the thesis.
 - b) copies of the reports circulated under 4.5.8.
- 4.5.14 Examiners must assess the candidate's performance in the Oral Examination against the following quality measures:
- a) The candidate demonstrates detailed knowledge of the thesis
 - b) The candidate demonstrates an understanding of their research in the broader context of their discipline
 - c) The candidate is able to defend the methodology and conclusions of the thesis and displays an awareness of any limitations
 - d) The candidate effectively communicates the results of the research in terms of impact and application of new knowledge
 - e) For doctoral candidates, the candidate as an individual demonstrates a substantive and independent contribution to the discipline
- 4.5.15 The Panel Chair must ensure that:
- a) the examiners have the chance to ask any questions they may have about the thesis and to discuss other matters related to the research.
 - b) irrelevant questions are not asked.
 - c) the candidate has adequate opportunity to defend their work and to answer questions or respond to criticisms.
 - d) the candidate is treated fairly and respectfully, and not subjected to undue stress.
- 4.6 The examination of the thesis must lead to one of the following outcomes:

Award	Possible Outcomes
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Master of Philosophy	a) Award: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy without amendment to the thesis; b) Minor Corrections: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy conditional on minor corrections to the thesis being made; c) Further Work: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy conditional on revisions to part or parts of the thesis being made; d) Revise and Re-examine: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy but may revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination on one further occasion only; e) Non-Award: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy and may not revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination.
Doctor of Philosophy	a) Award: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy without amendment to the thesis; b) Minor Corrections: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy conditional on minor corrections to the thesis being made; c) Further Work: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy conditional on revisions to part or parts of the thesis being made; d) Revise and Re-examine: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy but may revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination on one further occasion only; e) Lower Award: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and may not revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination, but is recommended for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy; f) Non-Award: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, may not revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination, and is not recommended for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Doctor of Professional Practice	a) Award: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Practice without amendment to the thesis; b) Minor Corrections: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Practice conditional on minor corrections to the thesis being made; c) Further Work: the candidate has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Practice conditional on revisions to part or parts of the thesis being made; d) Revise and Re-examine: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Practice but may revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination on one further occasion only; e) Lower Award: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and may not revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination, but is recommended for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy; f) Non-Award: the candidate has not completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, may not revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination, and is not recommended for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.
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- 4.6.1 The Chair of Examiners must make a confidential written report on the basis of the written examiners' reports and the oral examination to the School of Graduate Research Committee, including recommendation of one of the outcomes in 4.6 and summarising any amendments or revisions to be made to the thesis.
- 4.6.2 The School of Graduate Research Committee considers the report and recommendation of the Chair of Examiners and decides the outcome of the examination in accordance with 4.6, provided that:
- a) any required amendments to the thesis are completed by the candidate within twelve months of receipt of written notification of the outcome of the examination;
 - b) any required amendments to the thesis are approved by the Chair of Examiners as having met the requirements of the examination, after the Chair has sought advice (where applicable) from a Supervisor or one or more of the Examiners;
 - c) a thesis that is permitted to be resubmitted for re-examination is resubmitted within twelve months of receipt of written notification of the outcome of the examination;
 - d) no thesis is resubmitted more than once.
- 4.6.3 School of Graduate Research Committee must inform the candidate and the supervisor(s) in writing of the outcome of the examination. The School of Graduate Research Committee has discretion to decide the form of written report to be provided.
- 4.6.4 The School of Graduate Research Committee must report the outcome of each examination to the Academic Board.

- 4.6.5 A candidate may have recourse to the Appeals Policy to dispute the outcome of the examination if the candidate is able to provide evidence of clearly incorrect claim regarding the thesis that go beyond matters of opinion, or failure to comply with the examination procedures of this Policy.