

## HDR Examination Procedure

*Policy Code: RS1938*

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### Purpose

This Procedure is to describe the steps involved in the examination of higher degree by research theses.

### Scope

This Procedure applies to:

- the examination of theses of masters Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Research) and Doctoral degree (Professional) theses;
- supervisors of higher degree by research candidates;
- higher degree by research candidates;
- Associate Deans, Research, Higher Degree by Research Coordinators, and Deans of Schools.

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## Legislative Context

Policy Base

[Regulation 5.1 - Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Masters Degree by Research and Professional Doctorates.](#)

## Definitions

Term	Definition
Associate Supervisor	A person who provides support to the student and to the Principal Supervisor.
Candidate	A student enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research program.
Co Supervisor	A person who provides support to the candidate and to the Principal Supervisor but is external to the University and is not an employee of the University.
Confirmed Candidate	A candidate enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research program who has completed and passed a Confirmation of Candidature.
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
Principal Supervisor	A person who has prime responsibility for guiding the progress of a designated research higher degree candidate.
Provisional Principal Supervisor	A person who, under the direction of an appropriate School-appointed mentor, has responsibility for guiding the progress of a designated higher degree by research candidate.
RHDSC - Research Higher Degrees Sub- Committee	The RHDSC, a Sub-committee of Research Committee, handles all operational matters requiring Committee approval that relate to HDR students.
Supervisory Panel	A panel consisting of at least two members (including the Principal Supervisor and at least one associate supervisor) which oversees the planning and execution of the project and preparation and submission of the thesis.

## Actions

### Eligibility to Submit for Examination

To be eligible to submit a thesis/exegesis/portfolio for examination a candidate must:

- Be admitted to candidature;
- Be currently enrolled;
- Have been enrolled for the minimum period required;
- Have had their candidature confirmed;
- Have approval from the Dean or nominee to submit the thesis.

Candidates submitting a thesis/exegesis/portfolio must:

- Make all required declarations;
- Prepare the thesis/exegesis/portfolio in accordance with this Procedure;

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- Not submit for examination work that is:
  - Substantially similar to work previously examined and rejected in Australia or overseas, unless approved by Academic Board;
  - Substantially similar to a thesis upon which the candidate has qualified in whole or in part for any other qualification obtained at another tertiary institution in Australia or overseas;
  - substantially similar to a thesis that is under examination for any other qualification of another tertiary institution, except where the thesis is being submitted jointly to Federation University Australia and another institution for a jointly awarded qualification.

The University is under no obligation to accept a thesis for examination from a candidate who has abandoned their program, is absent without approved leave, or has failed to re-enrol.

## Nomination of Examiners and Conflict of Interest

After considering recommendations from the supervisor(s), the Academic Board shall appoint at least two examiners who will be external to the University.

Examiners shall:

1. Hold a PhD or possess equivalent relevant professional experience for the examination of a Doctoral Degree (Research) or Doctoral Degree (Professional), and at least a masters degree or possess equivalent relevant professional experience for examination of a Masters Degree (research),
2. Be independent of the conduct of the candidate's research,
3. Have current international standing in the discipline or field of research in which the candidate's research program has been conducted,
4. Have empathy with the theoretical framework used by the candidate,
5. Be without bias and real or perceived conflict of interest, and sign a conflict of interest declaration.

Examiners must be external to and independent of the University, and may be from outside of Australia. Where possible, at least one examiner should have experience in the examination and/or supervision of higher degree by research theses at the appropriate level. Where possible, at least one examiner should, within the last 5 years, have been actively associated with a university, institution of higher learning, or a research institution. A person will be ineligible to serve as an examiner if they:

- Have a pending appointment with, are currently employed by, or have been employed by The University in any capacity within the last 5 years;
- Have a pending appointment with, currently hold, or have within the past 5 years, held an honorary position with the University;
- Have had direct involvement with the thesis, though reading drafts or discussing the research;
- Have been a collaborator or co-author with the candidate under examination within the last 5 years;
- Have been a collaborator or co-author of the candidate's supervisor within the last 5 years;
- Have a real or perceived conflict of interest with the candidate, the supervisors, or the institution (see below).

Candidates must be given an explicit opportunity to provide feedback on examiners or categories of examiners who are inappropriate to examine the thesis, but must not know the names of potential examiners nominated. Where an examiner fails to return an assessment within 12 weeks, the Academic Board may appoint a replacement examiner. The name of any examiner shall not be disclosed to a Candidate prior to or during examination, and will be disclosed to the Candidate on completion of examination only with the agreement of the examiner.

## Conflict of Interest in Examination

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Conflicts of interest in the examination process generally arise from working, personal, legal, business, professional and/or social relationships between the candidate and the examiner, or the supervisor and the examiner. In considering conflict of interest, distinction must be made between major potential conflicts of interest that would normally preclude the appointment of a potential examiner, and minor potential conflicts of interest that should be declared but which would not normally preclude the appointment of an examiner. Australian Council of Graduate Research guidelines detail specific circumstances that may constitute major and minor conflicts of interest

The process for nomination of examiners is as follows:

Step	Who is responsible?	Comments
1. Names of three potential examiners submitted to Research Services on appropriate form, with an indication of the preferred 2 examiners.	Supervisor	Nominations are provided BEFORE contacting the preferred potential examiners. Potential conflicts of interest to be identified. Supervisors should ensure that the candidate has an opportunity to exclude potential examiners prior to nomination.
2. Three potential nominees approved by RS.	Research Services	Approval based upon research background and experience in supervision/examination.
3. Availability of nominees determined.	Supervisor	If nominees are known to the supervisor then informal contact can be made and availability determined. If nominees are not known to the supervisor then formal invitation to act as an examiner to be sent by Research Services
4. The 2 preferred potential nominees are contacted and invited to be examiners.	RS	If nominees accept then they are involved in the examination process. If one of the preferred nominees declines the invitation, the third nominee is invited to be an examiner
5. Thesis sent to examiners with letter outlining terms and conditions of examination and specific advice relating the examination.	RS	Specific advice in relation to examination of a thesis incorporating published papers is provided to examiners. This advice is tailored for each thesis taking into account whether chapters are published, accepted for publication, submitted or drafted for submission.

## Format of Thesis

On completing the program of advanced study and research, a Candidate shall submit a thesis based on work carried out during candidature. A thesis may adopt one of the following formats:

- Conventional thesis,
- Thesis incorporating published papers,
- Practical works and an exegesis.

The thesis must be presented in accord with the requirements outlined below.

- A conventional thesis may incorporate or include as an appendix any publication resulting from the work completed during candidature whether or not the candidate is the sole author or one of the joint authors.

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- A thesis incorporating published papers is one where papers based upon the candidate's research form a substantial part of the thesis content rather than, as above, where one or more papers are included as appendices. In this case, most of the thesis chapters will be in the form of papers published, accepted for publication, submitted for publication or drafted for submission. Such a thesis will have equivalent intellectual content and rigour, and make the same contribution to knowledge, as a conventional thesis. The material presented for a Doctor of Philosophy (Research) incorporating published papers must be presented in a logical sequence to form a coherent whole.
- A Candidate may not present in the thesis any work for which another award has been conferred by the University or any other academic institution, but a Candidate shall not be precluded from incorporating extracts from such work in the thesis provided that the sum of any such extracts does not constitute the major proportion of the thesis and provided also that the source of each such extract is stated explicitly.
- The thesis shall adhere to the principles of research integrity concerning plagiarism and research ethics as stipulated in the code of research conduct and professional practice specified by the University.
- The thesis shall identify the extent to which the work of others is being relied upon by providing appropriate acknowledgment, citation, and reference in the text and in the bibliography or list of references.
- The statement of authorship and originality signed and dated by the Candidate when the thesis is submitted for examination will include a declaration that no other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgment in the main text and bibliography of the thesis. This statement will also acknowledge editorial assistance and copyright provisions and approvals, and include acknowledgement that a plagiarism report has been submitted to the University.
- In cases where ethics approval was required for any component of the research, a statement must be submitted with the thesis from the Chair of the relevant ethics committee, declaring that all necessary ethics-related processes have been completed.

## General requirements

The thesis presented by a Candidate for examination shall conform with the requirements of this section unless otherwise agreed by the Academic Board:

A Doctoral Degree (Research) thesis will normally be:

- a text of not more than 100,000 words reporting original scholarship and research carried out by the Candidate under supervision, or
- a major work or collection of works, including but not restricted to visual presentation, literary production or computer software development, carried out by the Candidate under supervision and accompanied by an exegesis or scholarly commentary of between 20,000 and 40,000 words.

A Doctoral degree (Professional) thesis will normally be:

- a text of not more than 45,000 words reporting original scholarship and research carried out by the Candidate under supervision, or
- a major work or collection of works, including but not restricted to visual presentation, literary production or computer software development, carried out by the Candidate under supervision and accompanied by an exegesis or scholarly commentary of between 10,000 and 20,000 words.

A Masters Degree (Research) thesis will normally be:

- a text of not more than 40,000 words reporting original scholarship and research carried out by the Candidate under supervision, or
- a major work or collection of works, including but not restricted to visual presentation, literary production or computer software development, carried out by the Candidate under supervision and accompanied by an exegesis or scholarly commentary of between 10,000 and 20,000 words.

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If a thesis or exegesis exceeds the respective upper word limit it may not be acceptable for submission and the Candidate may be asked to reduce the word count. If an over-length thesis is formally approved for submission and examination, examiners must be informed of the length of the thesis when being invited to act as examiners.

Candidates for higher degrees by research shall present for examination the required number of copies of the thesis. If the thesis includes a major work or collection of works, the major work or collection of works shall be presented in a format suitable for examination. A thesis may be rejected as unfit for examination if it does not conform to the requirements set out in this section.

## Specific requirements

- Written work submitted for examination shall be in the English language, unless an exemption is granted by the Academic Board prior to submission.
- If the thesis is based on research conducted in collaboration, the nature and extent of the Candidate's contribution to the research shall be clearly indicated.
- A Candidate shall identify all sources of background knowledge and the extent to which the work of others is being relied upon by providing appropriate acknowledgment, citation and reference in the text of the thesis and in the bibliography.
- The text shall be written as concisely as possible.
- The Candidate is responsible for checking the thesis prior to submission to ensure there are no typographical errors and that the spelling, punctuation and grammar are correct.
- The thesis text shall be prepared and submitted using the thesis template as approved by Academic Board. and shall incorporate, in the following order:
  1. A title page setting out in the following order:
    - the full title of the thesis;
    - the name of the Candidate;
    - the degree for which the thesis is submitted and a statement of whether the thesis is submitted in total or partial fulfilment of the requirements for that degree;
    - the name of the School;
    - the name of the University; and
    - the month and the year in which the thesis was submitted for examination.
  2. An index of contents;
  3. A summary of not more than 300 words;
  4. A "Statement of authorship and originality" in the following words, and which must be signed and dated by the Candidate:

"Statement of authorship and originality":

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and the list of references of the thesis. No editorial assistance has been received in the production of the thesis without due acknowledgement. Except where duly referred to, the thesis does not include material with copyright provisions or requiring copyright approvals.

Once the thesis has been passed the candidate must provide one electronic copy of the thesis to Research Services for inclusion in the University Library. The printed copy must be printed on archival quality paper of international standard size (A4) and be bound in a permanent hard cover binding with the following text on the spine:

- The full name of the author as it appears on the student record,

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- The title of the thesis,
- The name of the degree,
- The year of submission.

## Presentation of a Thesis Incorporating Published Papers

A thesis incorporating publications is a thesis where papers based upon the candidate's research (submitted for a Masters Degree (Research) or Doctoral Degree) form a substantial part of the thesis content, rather than where one or more papers are included as appendices to the thesis. All publications incorporated into the thesis must be based on the candidate's own research. In jointly authored papers, the candidate should normally be the senior/first author and the contribution of the candidate must be clearly indicated. Depending upon paper length and substance, the normal requirements will be 4 - 6 papers for a PhD, and 2 - 3 papers for a Masters degree. Up to 66% of the papers selected for inclusion in the thesis may be drawn from papers published prior to candidature. Where a candidate has had an ongoing relationship with the University and work has been published during the period of that relationship, then 100% of papers selected for inclusion in the thesis may be drawn from papers published prior to candidature.

Papers selected for a Doctoral Degree should be peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or ranked conference papers. Papers selected for a Masters Degree should include at least one peer-reviewed journal article. Candidates submitting papers for publication during their candidature are encouraged to select journals which are rigorously peer-reviewed and are highly suitable to their research area. The relative standard of journals should be considered and high quality journals are recommended.

Peer-reviewed papers included in the thesis will normally have been either published or accepted for publication (evidence of publication or acceptance should be included as an appendix to the thesis). However, some chapters of the thesis might be presented in the form of papers prepared for publication but not yet submitted. The status of these publications must be clearly indicated.

The standard and content of a thesis incorporating publications should be equivalent to that required for a Masters by Research or PhD. Where several published papers are included, they should be sequential in their presentation of research findings and conform with the requirements for the thesis as outlined below.

## Thesis structure

Any thesis presented incorporating publications must still have a structure resembling a typical thesis in the relevant discipline and must read as a coherent whole. The thesis should have:

- an introduction which acts as a framework, describing the scope of the published work, clearly articulating the major question(s) or argument that the body of published work addresses, placing the published research into context using the key relevant literature, and highlighting the significance of the major question;
- a separate methods chapter outlining overall approach and broad methodologies if deemed appropriate;
- a series of data "chapters" each consisting of a published paper or manuscript accepted, submitted, or drafted for publication;
- a brief (less than one page) bridge between each of the papers which explains how each paper relates to, extends, or builds upon the previous one;
- a concluding discussion which summarises the major findings of the body of published work, clearly articulates the degree to which the body of published work answers the major question(s) or supports the major argument, draws overall conclusions, links the research with the established body of knowledge, and clearly describes how the published body of work makes an original contribution to knowledge in the field.

Normally, the thesis introduction, methods chapter (if incorporated), and concluding discussion will total 20-25,000 words for a Doctoral Degree and 10-15,000 words for a Masters Degree.

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The contained publications should be "stand-alone" chapters. Additional chapters which have not yet been published might be presented in the format of papers for publication; however, it must be made clear to the examiner the status of these papers (draft; submitted to a specific journal but no response as yet; submitted and under review; submitted and under revision). Unless one of the published papers is a literature review, there should be a chapter that reviews the literature to provide context for the published papers.

It is accepted that there might be some repetition within the introduction of papers included in the thesis and that additional chapters or appendices might be needed offering further information or presenting work (for example, unsuccessful experimentation or lines of enquiry) that has yet to be, or might never be, published. These situations will be adequately explained in the instructions to examiners. A thesis presented incorporating publications must demonstrate equivalent intellectual content to that of the more typical thesis format.

## Instructions to examiners

The thesis will be examined according to the University's normal examination process. Clear instructions outlining the University's expectations for examining a thesis incorporating published papers will be provided to examiners. These instructions will vary depending upon how much of the thesis has been published or accepted for publication, and how much has been submitted or prepared for submission for publication. Where the thesis contains a series of chapters that have been published or accepted for publication, examiners will be advised to consider the whole thesis, but to focus particular attention on the introduction and concluding discussion chapters. Where the thesis contains chapters that have not yet been accepted for publication, examiners will be advised to consider the whole thesis, but to focus particular attention on the content of the unpublished chapters, introduction and discussion. Where the thesis consists entirely of unpublished papers as chapters, examiners will be advised to examine the entire thesis as would be the case for a conventional thesis, taking into account the idiosyncrasies of the format of a thesis incorporating publications (for example, repetition of material in chapter introductions and methods sections).

## Role of supervisor

In addition to the normal expectations of a supervisor, the role of the supervisor for this style of thesis includes:

- For papers submitted for publication during candidature, ensuring that papers are of the highest quality possible and submitted to high quality journals;
- For papers submitted for publication during candidature, ensuring that papers are submitted for publication in a timely manner;
- For papers submitted for publication during candidature, ensuring that papers support the overall argument advanced in the thesis;
- For papers published prior to candidature, ensuring that papers selected for inclusion in the thesis are of the highest quality possible and best contribute to the overall argument advanced in the thesis;
- Ensuring that the overall scope of work to be included in the thesis is adequate in terms of number and size of papers, and addresses the overall argument advanced in the thesis;
- Ensuring that the published work selected for inclusion in the thesis presents a coherent and well-reasoned argument;
- Ensuring that the thesis meets the requirements as outlined above.

## Copyright issues for a thesis incorporating published papers

Candidates submitting a thesis incorporating published papers need to be aware of the publication policies of commercial academic publishers to whom they intend to submit articles for publication, and how these policies may affect the completion and submission of their thesis.

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Most academic publishers require authors to transfer copyright to the publisher which will restrict the ability of the author or Federation University to make a copy of the article available online, including as part of a PhD by publication thesis. In some cases publishers will allow the author to place a pre-print version (that is a final version of the paper in Word format - before it has been typeset for inclusion in the journal) onto an online repository. Therefore, it is very important that candidates retain full, complete copies of the final versions of all articles, as in some cases these can be included in the online version of their thesis.

If a publisher does not allow any version of the article to be made available online, it may only be possible for the University to include URL links to the articles that form part of the thesis. Access to these articles may then only be available via a subscription to the journal, so the full thesis will not be openly available to all users.

With this in mind, candidates submitting a thesis incorporating published papers should scrutinise publishers' policies and be sure that they will allow for appropriate access to material that will be included in their thesis before entering into an agreement with an academic publisher. They should also consider asking publishers for permission to include their article in an online version of the thesis and retain copies of all agreements. Candidates can seek assistance in this task by contacting the University Library. Library staff are able to advise on obtaining the necessary copyright approvals.

## Editing of a Thesis

It is expected that the academic supervisors of higher degree by research candidates will provide their students with editorial advice relating to matters of substance and structure; language (including matters of clarity, voice and tone, grammar, spelling and punctuation, specialised and foreign material); and use of illustrations and tables. They may also assist with copyediting and proofreading.

Candidates may use a professional editor in preparing their thesis for submission, but they should notify their principal supervisor of their intention to do so. Professional editorial assistance should be restricted to copyediting and proofreading. In relation to matters of substance and structure, the professional editor may draw attention to problems, but should not provide solutions.

## Submission of the Thesis

A Candidate shall notify the University of their intention to submit the thesis for examination using the appropriate form. This form must be submitted to Research Services 30 working days prior to the submission of the thesis/ portfolio, and must include the title of the thesis and an electronic and hard copy of the abstract (300 word limit) on the template in the form. This form must be signed by the candidate, the principal supervisor and the Dean or nominee

Doctoral Degree (Professional) candidates must also provide a certified copy of the results for the Advanced Study Units and Research Projects completed in the course of their enrolment. The portfolio will not be sent out for examination without confirmation of these results.

## Examination of the Thesis

Examiners are required to assess the thesis in terms of whether the Candidate has made a significant and original contribution to knowledge, has demonstrated an understanding of the relationship of the investigations undertaken to a wider field of knowledge, and has demonstrated substantial knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of learning. In addition to providing the Academic Board with written comments bearing on these criteria, the examiners, acting independently, will recommend to the Academic Board that:

1. the thesis should be classified as PASSED without further examination; or
2. the thesis should be classified as PASSED, subject to the corrections outlined in reports from examiners being made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board; or

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3. the Candidate should be required to pass a written and/or oral examination in subject matter directly related to the thesis before the thesis is classified as PASSED; or
4. the thesis should be classified as DEFERRED and the Candidate should be permitted to submit the thesis for examination in a revised form; or
5. the thesis should be classified as FAILED.

An overall grade will be awarded by the Academic Board on consideration of the individual recommendations of the examiners by Research Services (see "Consideration of Examiners' Reports" below). If the recommendations received from examiners markedly differ, the Academic Board may take such action as it thinks fit, such as the appointment of an additional examiner to supply an examination report.

The Academic Board may require that the Candidate be examined orally on the substance of the thesis. Such oral examination shall be conducted under arrangements made by the Academic Board in consultation with the examiners, the principal supervisor, and the Dean of School. The Candidate shall be advised in advance of the persons to be present at the examination and of the general arrangements for the conduct of the examination.

In the case of a Candidate who accepts an invitation to submit a revised thesis for re-examination, the Candidate shall be provided with guidelines for revision of the thesis based on the reports of the examiners. Only in exceptional cases will more than a single attempt at revision of the thesis be permitted. Where a thesis is to be corrected or revised and submitted for re-examination, the candidate must complete the requirement within a time limit specified by the Academic Board. Where a thesis is to be revised and submitted for re-examination, the examiners will normally be those who evaluated the thesis on initial submission (see "Nomination of examiners" above).

## Examination Guidelines

### Masters Degree (Research)

Regulation 5.1 PART C – Masters Degree (Research) states that the degree will be awarded on the basis of a candidate:

- Having demonstrated command of the knowledge and skills pertinent to the area of investigation; and,
- Having demonstrated a critical appreciation and understanding of the relationship of their own work to that of others.

These outcomes should be assessed in the context of what might reasonably be expected within the timeframe of eighteen months to two years of full-time study (or part-time equivalent). The following questions have been developed to assist examiners in determining if a candidate has met the above criteria and also to provide points of reference for their written report. The questions are grouped under sections common to many theses, but should be interpreted and used flexibly to cater for any differences between areas of study and to allow for appropriately novel approaches.

#### Introduction

- Has the candidate demonstrated the ability to clearly conceptualise and articulate the research objectives and associated hypotheses?
- Has the candidate demonstrated a detailed, critical and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the literature pertinent to the area of investigation?
- Is the literature analysed within an overall conceptual framework and is it made clear where and how the stated research objectives reside within the wider field(s) of study?

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## Methodology

- Are the methodologies used appropriate to the research topic and is their use properly justified?
- Is there sufficient evidence of the candidate's mastery of the techniques that the methodologies require and utilize?

## Results

- Are the results connected in a direct and obvious way to the stated research objectives/questions?
- Are the results presented clearly and logically and with appropriate illustration?
- Are the results critically analysed in the context of any limitation that might characterise the methodologies used?
- Are surprising results adequately explained?
- Are justifiable conclusions drawn?

## Discussion

- Does the candidate make clear what new findings have been made?
- Are new findings placed in the context of previous research with an indication of the extent to which that research is supported or contradicted?
- Does the candidate adequately demonstrate a critical appreciation and understanding of the relationship of their work to that of others?

## Presentation

- Is the thesis coherent and well structured?
- Does the thesis exhibit appropriate standards of grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity and presentation?
- Are citations and references adequate and accurate?

## Practical work(s) accompanied by an exegesis

In some instances an approved Masters program will comprise practical works and an exegesis.

The practical work(s) might comprise a major work or collection of works such as, but not limited to, a visual presentation, a literary production or computer software development.

## Practical work(s)

- Is there a systematic line of enquiry?
- Is there a demonstrable and essential link with the exegesis?
- Does the candidate demonstrate appropriate technical capabilities?
- Is the work sufficiently complex?
- Has the work(s) been presented in a form suitable for examination?

## Exegesis

- In addition to the above, has the candidate:
- Developed a demonstrable and essential link with the practical work(s)?
- Elaborated on the line of enquiry and investigation pursued in preparation of the practical work(s)?
- Offered a commentary on individual practical works and their overall relationship?

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## Doctoral Degree (Research)

Regulation 5.1 PART C - The Doctoral Degree (Research) states that the degree will be awarded on the basis of a candidate:

- Having made a substantial contribution to knowledge; and
- Having demonstrated an understanding of the relationship of the investigations undertaken to a wider field of knowledge.

These outcomes should be assessed in the context of what might reasonably be expected within the timeframe of three to three and a half years of fulltime study (or part-time equivalent). The following questions relate to sections that most commonly occur in theses. While not intended to be constraining, these questions, can assist in determining if a candidate has met the above criteria and also provide a framework for a written report on the thesis.

### Introduction

- Has the candidate established a research question of significance?
- Has the candidate demonstrated the ability to clearly conceptualise and articulate the research objectives and associated hypotheses?
- Has the candidate demonstrated a detailed, critical and comprehensive knowledge/understanding of the literature and the theoretical constructs pertinent to the stated research objectives?
- Is the literature analysed within an overall conceptual framework and is it made clear where and how the stated research objectives reside within the wider field(s) of study?
- Has the candidate clearly enunciated the nature and extent of their supposed original and significant contributions to the body of knowledge?

### Methodology

- Is the methodology used appropriate to the research topic and is their use properly justified?
- Is there sufficient evidence of the candidate's mastery of the techniques that the methodologies require and utilise?

### Results

- Are the results connected in a direct and obvious way to the stated research objectives/questions?
- Are the results presented clearly and logically and with appropriate illustration?
- Are the results critically analysed in the context of any limitation that might characterise the methodologies used?
- Are surprising results adequately explained?
- Are justifiable conclusions drawn?

### Discussion

- Does the candidate make clear what new findings have been made?
- Are new findings placed in the context of previous research with an indication of the extent to which that research is supported or contradicted?
- Does the candidate adequately discuss the extent to which their findings constitute a significant contribution to knowledge?
- What new opportunities for further research do the findings reveal?

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## Presentation

- Is the thesis coherent and well structured?
- Does the thesis exhibit appropriate standards of grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity and presentation?
- Are citations and references adequate and accurate?

## Publication

- Does the thesis contain material of publishable quality?

## Practical work(s) accompanied by an exegesis

In some instances an approved Doctor of Philosophy program will comprise practical works and an exegesis.

The practical work(s) might comprise a major work or collection of works such as, but not limited to, a visual presentation, a literary production or computer software development.

## Practical work(s)

- Is there a systematic line of enquiry?
- Is there a demonstrable and essential link with the exegesis?
- Does the candidate demonstrate appropriate technical capabilities?
- Is the work sufficiently complex?
- Has the work(s) been presented in a form suitable for examination?

## Exegesis

In addition to the questions relating to a thesis:

- Is there a demonstrable and essential link with the practical work(s)?
- Is there an elaboration of the line of enquiry and investigation pursued in preparation of the practical work(s)?
- Is there a commentary on individual practical works and their overall relationship?

## Doctoral Degree (Professional)

Regulation 5.1 PART D Doctoral Degree (Professional) states that the degree will be awarded on the basis of a candidate:

- Having made a significant contribution to knowledge; and
- Having demonstrated an understanding of the relationship of the investigations undertaken to a wider field of knowledge.

These outcomes should be assessed in the context of what might reasonably be expected within the time frame of three to three and a half years of full time study (or part time equivalent). A professional doctorate program involves the preparation and presentation of a portfolio which will include advanced study reports for units of coursework undertaken by the candidate (including a statement of results) and a research component which may take the form of a single research report or a bound series of research reports accompanied by an exegesis. The following questions, while not intended to be constraining, can be asked in relation to sections of a single research report to assist in determining if a candidate has met the above criteria and to provide a framework for a written report on the research component of the portfolio.

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## Introduction

- Has the candidate established a field based research question of significance (i.e. a question set in an appropriate professional or clinical setting in the field or workplace)?
- Has the candidate demonstrated the ability to clearly conceptualise and articulate the research objectives and associated hypotheses?
- Has the candidate demonstrated a detailed, critical and comprehensive knowledge/understanding of the literature and the theoretical constructs pertinent to the stated research objectives?
- Is the literature analysed within an overall conceptual framework and is it made clear where and how the stated research objectives reside within the wider field(s) of study?
- Has the candidate clearly enunciated the nature and extent of their supposed original and significant contributions to the body of knowledge?

## Methodology

- Are the methodologies used appropriate to the research topic and is their use properly justified?
- Is there sufficient evidence of the candidate's mastery of the techniques that the methodologies require and utilise?

## Results

- Are the results connected in a direct and obvious way to the stated research objectives/questions?
- Are the results presented clearly and logically and with appropriate illustration?
- Are the results critically analysed in the context of any limitation that might characterise the methodologies used?
- Are surprising results adequately explained?
- Are justifiable conclusions drawn?

## Discussion

- Does the candidate make clear what new findings have been made?
- Are new findings placed in the context of previous research with an indication of the extent to which that research is supported or contradicted?
- Does the candidate adequately discuss the extent to which their findings constitute a significant contribution to knowledge?
- What new opportunities for further research do the findings reveal?

## Presentation

- Is the research report coherent and well structured?
- Does the research report exhibit appropriate standards of grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity and presentation?
- Are citations and references adequate and accurate?

## Publication

- Does the research report contain material of publishable quality?

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## Series of research reports accompanied by an exegesis

In some instances an approved Doctoral Degree (Professional) program will comprise a series of research reports and an exegesis. The research reports and exegesis will satisfy the assessment criteria for a single report, outlined above, and in addition be subject to the following questions.

### Series of research reports

- Is there a systematic line of enquiry and investigation?
- Is there a demonstrable and essential link with the exegesis?

### Exegesis

- Is there a demonstrable and essential link with the series of research reports?
- Is there an elaboration of the line of enquiry and investigation pursued in preparation of the series of research reports? Is there a commentary on individual research reports and their overall relationship?

## Consideration of Examiners' Reports

### Weighing up examiners' opinions

The examiners make recommendations to the University as to whether a higher degree by research should be awarded to a given candidate; the University is the final arbiter of this process. The final decision for the outcome of the examination of a higher degree by research will be based upon the weight of examiner opinion, a balanced and objective assessment of all the information available, consideration of the role and advice of the School Examination Committee, and natural justice. The latter is an issue that needs to be borne in mind where the potential for appeal exists. This is particularly important when considering discrepant examiners recommendations.

In making a final recommendation for the examination process, all examiners' reports will be carefully reviewed and evaluated; the recommendation will reflect an assessment of all the information available on the quality of the thesis and not simply reliance on the recommendation of a single examiner. An overall judgement will be made as to whether the reports are, on balance, essentially favourable. The opinion of a dissenting examiner will not be over-weighted in deciding the outcome of the examination process.

If the University is unable to resolve discrepant recommendations then an additional examiner will be appointed. An additional examiner will receive the thesis but not the reports of previous examiners. The report and recommendation of the additional examiner will be weighed up against the original examiners' recommendations as described above to determine a final outcome.

### Responding to examiners' comments

The examiner must state clearly in the examination report what the candidate needs to do to address issues and to provide specific guidance to the candidate as to how he/she can address the issues raised. Vague statements that can be interpreted as opinion, such as "it would have been good if ...", "the candidate could have ...", "discussion of ... would have been useful", without specific direction, such as "the candidate must ...", "the candidate should ...", cannot be given weight. The candidate will not be expected to respond to vague comments or statements of opinion. Where the examiner makes statements that suggest an intent to redefine the project or to usurp the role of supervisor, such as "if I were supervising this student I would have ...", such statements should also be discounted.

In the case of a thesis that has been revised and submitted for re-examination in response to a "Deferred" outcome, an examiner who has previously examined the thesis may not use criteria to re-examine the thesis that

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were not made explicit to the candidate in the original report. It is unreasonable to expect the candidate to anticipate the expectations of an examiner if they were not made clear in the original examination report. Thesis revisions on the basis of examiner comments should address the specifics of the examiner's comments; if those comments are not specific then the candidate cannot be expected to address them and a thesis should not be sent for re-examination to an examiner who has not provided specific guidance to the candidate as to how to address issues.

## Revised theses submitted for re-examination

Revised theses submitted for re-examination will be examined by the same examiners whose advice has formed the basis of the recommendations to the candidate for the revision of the thesis. Examiners of a re-submitted thesis will be provided with:

- The University's advice to the candidate for the revision of the thesis, including original examiner's reports and an integrated list of agreed revisions;
- A comprehensive statement from the candidate outlining the substantive changes that have been made to the thesis, and a concise defence against any recommendations for changes that have not been accepted;
- The University's procedure for dealing with revised and re-submitted theses.

It is not normally appropriate for examiners of a resubmitted thesis to raise new issues of substantive concern, unless the revision has been major and has altered the substantive conclusions of the thesis. Where the original examiners are no longer available alternative examiners will be used. In this case, new issues not previously raised and communicated to the candidate will not be taken into account when considering the recommendations of examiners of a resubmitted thesis. Irrespective of the specifications of the original examiners, the revised and resubmitted thesis must satisfy the University's criteria for the award of the degree.

## Examination Duration

Examiners must indicate their willingness to return the marked thesis in a timely manner. Time limits for examination are 4 to 6 weeks for a Masters Degree (Research), and 6 to 8 weeks for a Doctoral Degree. Examiners will be contacted fortnightly to obtain overdue reports. When a realistic re-negotiated return date is not, or cannot, be met a replacement examiner will be appointed. Normally, a re-negotiated return date will not exceed 12 weeks. Where a replacement examiner has been appointed, any report subsequently received from the replaced examiner will not be considered in determining the result of the examination. The candidate will be informed of any significant delays in the examination process.

## Confidentiality in the Examination Process

Examiners will be advised that the thesis is to be examined as a confidential document and unpublished content or findings cannot be divulged. There must be no contact between candidates and examiners or between supervisors and examiners during the period in which the examiners are preparing their reports. Examiners must not consult with each other unless approved by the University.

## Examination of a Performance or Exhibition of Creative Works

If the performance or exhibition is held prior to submission of the thesis, the candidate must present an abstract of the thesis prior to the performance or exhibition. Confidentiality of the examination will be maintained. This may require scheduling private sessions or performances for examiners, and may require that examiners attend the performance or exhibition at different times. If the performance or exhibition involves audience participation or interaction with the candidate, the candidate must not be in a position to inappropriately influence the examiners' assessment of the creative work. The exegesis and creative work must be examined as an integrated whole. A

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lasting record of the performance or exhibition (in print or electronic format) must be submitted with the thesis or within 6 weeks of submission of the thesis.

## Procedure

The procedure for examination of a HDR thesis is described as a series of steps in the sections below. These steps are grouped under the following headings:

- Procedure for submission of a thesis for examination
- Nomination and appointment of examiners
- Examination process post-submission
- Examiners' recommendations for a thesis and process post-receipt of examiners' reports
- Evaluation of examiner's recommendations and the outcome of examination
- The School Examinations Committee and corrections to the thesis
- Final ratification and award of the degree.

Step s		Who is responsible?	Comments
1	Intention To Submit Form	Candidate, Principal Supervisor (PS), Dean or nominee	Submitted to RS 30 working days prior to the submission of the candidate's thesis/portfolio. Includes the title of the thesis and an electronic and hard copy of the abstract (300 words) on the template in the form.  Professional Doctorate candidates provide a certified copy of results for the Advanced Study Units and Research Projects completed in the course of their enrolment. The portfolio will not be sent out for examination without confirmation of these results.
2	Nomination of Examiners.	PS, Dean or nominee	See detailed process for nomination of examiners above. The PS is responsible for the nomination of examiners on the approved form. Requirements are: 3 external nominations for a Masters examination; 3 external nominations for a PhD examination. The conditions under which a nominated person can act as an examiner are detailed above.
3	Release of Thesis/Exegesis/ Portfolio for Examination Form	Candidate, PS, Dean or nominee	Submitted to RS with the thesis/exegesis/portfolio. The thesis/exegesis/portfolio cannot be forwarded to examiners without this form. The candidate and

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Step s		Who is responsible?	Comments
			principal supervisor sign the appropriate declaration on authorship.  2 bound copies and an electronic version of the thesis must be submitted.
4	Approval of Examiners	DVC (R&I) or approved nominee	The DVC (R&I) or nominee, after considering recommendations from the supervisor and the relevant Dean appoints two examiners for Doctoral degree and Masters degree examinations.

## Examination process post-submission

Step s		Who is Responsible?	Comments
5	Invitation to Examine the thesis/ portfolio	RS	A letter/email is forwarded to the approved examiners confirming details of examination process and timelines, together with a copy of the abstract.
6	Acceptance to Examine the thesis/ portfolio	Examiner	Examiners confirm in writing that they are willing to examine the thesis/portfolio in the prescribed time, and accept conditions.
7	Thesis/Exegesis/Portfolio sent to Examiners	RS	The thesis/portfolio is forwarded to the examiners.
8	Creative works exhibition where applicable	Candidate/School	
9	Examination Reports	Examiner	Examination Reports are forwarded from the examiners to RS.

## Status of a candidate whilst under examination

Once the thesis has been submitted for examination, the candidate is recorded as “TD” Grade which indicates that the candidate is under examination. This grade does not attract course fees, unless the TD grade is activated after the HECS census dates (31 March and 31 August for each year) in which case course fees may be charged for that semester. The official date for the recording and commencement of the TD grade is the date that the thesis is submitted for examination.

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## Advice provided to examiners by the University

Examiners are directed to examine the thesis against a series of criteria posed as questions for each section of the thesis. The criteria are described above.

## Examiners' recommendations for a thesis and process post-receipt of examiners' reports

Steps		Who is Responsible?	Comments
9	Assessment	Examiners	<p>Examiners confirm their assessment by selecting the appropriate box on the examination form.</p> <p><b>Thesis/portfolio</b></p> <p>The thesis/portfolio should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PASSED without further examination; or</li> <li>b. PASSED, subject to corrections being made to the satisfaction of the Board; or</li> <li>c. the candidate should be required to pass a written and/or oral examination before the thesis is classified as PASSED; or</li> <li>d. DEFERRED and the candidate should be permitted to submit the thesis for examination in a revised form; or</li> <li>e. FAILED.</li> </ul> <p><b>Exegesis and Practical Works</b></p> <p>The thesis (practical works and/ or exegesis) should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ACCEPTED as meeting Masters/Doctoral Degree requirements,</li> <li>b. ACCEPTED as meeting Masters/Doctoral Degree requirements subject to changes</li> </ul>

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Step s		Who is Responsible?	Comments
			being made to the satisfaction of the board, or  c. the candidate should be allowed up to 12 months to revise the thesis (practical works and/ or exegesis) and to submit the thesis for re-examination, or  d. FAILED.
10	Results	RS Academic Advisor	RS reviews examiners' reports and makes an "on-balance" recommendation to the candidate, PS and School Examination Committee (FEC) regarding changes to the thesis.
11	Results	RS	Principal Supervisor, Dean or nominee, and candidate are advised of results of examination and provided with copies of the examiners' reports and the recommendation from RS. Names of examiners are provided unless confidentiality has been requested. Candidate and PS are provided with an Examination Report Template into which the details of amendments or corrections to be made to the thesis are entered.

## Evaluation of examiner's recommendations and the outcome of examination

Step s		Who Is Responsible?	Comments
12a	PASSED without further examination	RS	Candidate and Supervisor are encouraged to read reports if provided but the reports are for information only. ADR and Dean or nominee recommend the award of the degree to RHDSC.
12b	PASSED subject to corrections	RS	Candidate and Supervisor read the Examination reports and recommendation of RS.  Candidate then provides to the Principal Supervisor a draft of

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Steps		Who Is Responsible?	Comments
			<p>Examination Report Template that identifies all the proposed corrections. After PS and FEC approval student makes agreed changes and completes Examination Report Template confirming that the corrections have been completed or justification as to why the changes have not been accepted.</p> <p>PS then checks the corrected thesis and confirms that all the corrections have been made to their satisfaction. PS then recommends to FEC the award of the degree. FEC approves corrections and provides a recommendation to the RHDSC for the award of the degree.</p>
12c	DEFERRED, candidate permitted to submit the thesis for examination in a revised form	RS	<p>The Candidate and Supervisor read the Examination reports and recommendation of RS. The requirement for re-examination will be based on the “on-balance” evaluation of RS and discussion with PS.</p> <p>Where a candidate accepts an invitation to submit a revised thesis, they will be provided with guidelines for revision of the thesis based on the reports of the examiners. Only in exceptional cases will more than a single attempt at revision of the thesis be permitted. Where a thesis is to be submitted for re-examination in a revised form, the candidate must complete the required changes within a time limit specified by the Board.</p> <p>Candidate then provides to PS a report on the Deferred Examination Report, that identifies all the corrections to be made to thesis. If the candidate does not agree to make all required revisions, then a detailed explanation must be offered.</p>

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Steps		Who Is Responsible?	Comments
			<p>After PS and FEC approval candidate makes agreed changes and completes Examination Report Template confirming that the corrections have been completed. PS then confirms that all the corrections have been made to their satisfaction and recommends to FEC that the thesis be submitted for re-examination. FEC checks corrections and recommends to RHDSC that thesis be submitted for re-examination.</p> <p>Thesis is submitted for re-examination. The examiners will normally be those who evaluated the thesis on initial submission.</p>
<b>12d</b>	Examination Results Differ	RS Academic Advisor	<p>Where results differ RS makes an “on-balance” recommendation as to how to proceed. The Candidate and P S are advised immediately by RS of the result of the examination process and recommendation of RS Academic Advisor, which identifies the options available to the student.</p> <p>Where RS make a “PASSED subject to corrections” recommendation the student and PS adopt the process in 12b above; where RS make a “DEFERRED” recommendation the student and PS adopt the process in 12c above.</p> <p>PS then evaluates the student's report on changes to the thesis and makes a recommendation to FEC which reviews the changes and, in turn, makes a recommendation to RHDSC.</p>
<b>12e</b>	The candidate should be required to pass a written and/or oral examination in subject matter directly related to the thesis before the thesis is classified as PASSED	DVC (R&I) or approved nominee	The Board may require that the candidate be examined orally on the substance of the thesis. Such oral examination is conducted under arrangements made by the Board in consultation with the examiners, the PS, and the Dean

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Steps		Who Is Responsible?	Comments
			or nominee. The candidate is advised in advance of the persons to be present at the examination and of the general arrangements for the conduct of the examination.
12f	The thesis should be classified as FAILED.	DVC (R&I) or approved nominee	<p>The decision to fail a thesis will be based on the “on-balance” evaluation of examiners’ reports by RS after consultation with PS and executive Dean or nominee.</p> <p>RHDSC may invite the candidate to provide a case for exceptional circumstances. In such a case, the candidate may be given the opportunity to submit a revised thesis; where this occurs the candidate will be provided with guidelines for revision of the thesis based on the reports of the examiners. Only in exceptional cases will more than a single attempt at revision of the thesis be permitted. The candidate must complete the required changes within a time limit specified by the Board. Where a thesis is to be resubmitted, the examiners will normally be those who evaluated the thesis on initial submission.</p>

## The School Examinations Committee and corrections to the thesis

Steps		Who is Responsible?	Comments
13		Candidate and PS	PS and candidate discuss examiners’ reports and determine amendments or corrections required.
14		Candidate	Candidate details all amendments or corrections to be made to the thesis in the Examination Report Template which is signed by the PS.
15		FEC	FEC approves proposed amendments or corrections.
16		Candidate	Candidate makes all approved amendments or corrections and

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Steps		Who is Responsible?	Comments
			details all changes made on the Examination Report Template.
17		PS	PS checks that all changes have been made to his/her satisfaction and in accord with approval by FEC. PS then requests Dean or nominee to convene a meeting of FEC to review and approve amendments or corrections.
18		FEC	The FEC reviews proposed changes to thesis, approves completion of changes, and then makes a recommendation to RHDSC on whether the degree should be awarded.
19	Recommendation from the School Examination Committee	DVC (R&I) or approved nominee	The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or approved nominee review the recommendations from the SEC and provide a recommendation to RHDSC. RHDSC approves the recommendation that the degree be awarded.

## Final ratification and award of the degree

Steps		Who is Responsible?	Comments
20	Award of the Degree	RHDSC and Academic Board	<p>RHDSC recommends that the degree be awarded and the recommendation is approved by Research Committee.</p> <p>RS advises the candidate of the procedures to qualify for admission to the degree. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or approved nominee approves the Grade of Passed and RS processes the approved FedUni student services forms. When the Board is satisfied that a candidate has fulfilled the conditions prescribed for admission to the degree, the Board recommends to Council that the candidate be admitted to the degree.</p>

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## Distribution of Copies of the Thesis After Final Ratification

The degree will not be awarded until one electronic copy of the final thesis has been lodged with the University.

## Graduation

Candidates are eligible to graduate after the University Council approves the award of the degree. Students will be advised by Research Services of the Graduation forms that are required to be completed.

## Supporting Documents

- DDOGS "Framework for Best Practice in Doctoral examination in Australia"
- DDOGS "Conflict of Interest Guidelines"
- AQF
- HESF
- Regulation 5.1 - Higher degree by Research Candidature Management Policy

## Responsibility

### Research Services

Research Services is responsible for the administration of the examinations process, including recording the outcomes of examination and keeping the candidate informed.

## Promulgation

The [HDR Examination Procedure](#) will be communicated throughout the University via:

1. an Announcement Notice under 'FedNews' website and through the University Policy - 'Recently Approved Documents' webpage to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. inclusion on the University Policy, Procedure and Forms website; and/or
3. distribution of e-mails to Head of School / Head of Department / University staff; and/or
4. documentation distribution, eg. posters, brochures.
5. Other - please describe

## Implementation

The [HDR Examination Procedure](#) will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. Information Sessions; and/or
2. Training Sessions; and/or
3. Other - please describe

## Records Management

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Title	Location	Responsible Officer	Minimum Retention Period
Intention to submit form	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion
Nomination of Examiners form	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion
Release of Thesis forms	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion
Examiners Reports	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion
Research Services Examination Recommendation	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion
School Examination Committee Recommendation	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion
Recommendation for Award form	Research Services	Director, Research Services or delegate	Temporary - retain on the student file for 7 Years from date of program completion

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