

HDR Theses and Examinations Policy

Policy Code: RS2039

Table of Contents

Purpose	1
Scope	1
Legislative Context	1
Definitions	2
Policy Statement	3
4. The Thesis	4
5. Examination	6
Supporting Documents	13
Responsibility	14
Promulgation	14
Implementation	15

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the expectations and responsibilities of University Higher Degree by Research candidates, University staff and external examiners regarding the presentation and examination of theses.

Scope

1.1. This policy applies to:

- all candidates enrolled in HDR programs at Federation University
- registered HDR supervisors
- all individuals invited to participate in a HDR examination for a Federation University candidate, and
- all staff with administrative responsibilities related to HDR students, supervisors and examiners.

1.2. This policy applies to all accredited Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs offered by Federation University, including:

- Masters by Research
- Doctor of Philosophy
- Doctor of Professional Studies

1.3. Theses developed for undergraduate honours programs are not covered by this policy and related procedure, and honours students should instead refer to School or course-specific information.

Legislative Context

Federation University Australia Act 2010

Regulation 5.1 – Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Masters Degree by Research and Professional Doctorates

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act)

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015

Definitions

Term	Definition
Approved submission date	The approved date by which a candidate must submit their thesis.
ADR	Associate Dean Research
Candidate	Student enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research program.
Deferred	An examination outcome; the thesis should be classified as DEFERRED; the thesis requires substantial revision and re-examination by external experts and the candidate should be permitted to submit the thesis for examination in a revised form.
DGRS	Dean, Graduate Research School – Federation University staff member responsible for: academic oversight of HDR programs, HDR candidates and HDR supervision. The DGRS is assisted in this role by the ADRs.
Enrolment	The process by which a person, having received a written offer of a place, registers their program and course of study with Federation University by submitting a form of enrolment signed by both the applicant and the course coordinator or person of equivalent authority.
Failed	An examination outcome; the thesis should be classified as FAILED.
Federation University	Federation University Australia
Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Program	One of the following courses of study: Masters Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Research), Doctoral Degree (Professional).
Higher Degree by Research candidate	A student enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research Program at Federation University.
Graduate Research School (GRS)	Central department of the University with oversight of matters pertaining to higher degree by research.
Major corrections	An examination outcome; the thesis should be PASSED subject to major corrections made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board, (that is, the thesis requires new data collection, new or revised data analysis, substantive rewriting of one or more chapters, or contains a large number of stylistic/presentation errors. These actions should be undertaken with ongoing input from the supervisory team).
Minor corrections	An examination outcome; the thesis should be classified as PASSED, subject to minor corrections made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board, (that is, the thesis is suitable for conferral once the author has addressed nominated passages, textual errors, and referencing mistakes. These actions should largely be able to be undertaken independently by the candidate).
Passed	An examination outcome; the thesis should be classified as PASSED without further examination.
RHDC	Research Higher Degrees Committee – A standing committee of Academic Board that deals with matters pertaining to Higher Degree by Research.

Term	Definition
RTP	Research Training Program: Federal Government funding scheme that enables the provision of HDR fee offset and stipend scholarships.
School (School of enrolment)	Academic unit at Federation University in which candidates are enrolled.
SEC	School Examination Committee – committee of the School of enrolment.
Supervisor - Principal Supervisor (PS)	A staff member of Federation University who meets the requirements of and has been approved for inclusion on the Register of Supervisors as a Principal Supervisor and has primary oversight of a HDR candidate's research.

Policy Statement

3.1. This policy ensures that research candidates, supervisors, examiners and administrators have clear information about:

- the expected format and presentation of HDR theses, and
- HDR examination processes and requirements.

It ensures that Federation University's HDR theses and examination processes are consistent with the expectations of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Higher Education Standards (Threshold Framework) 2015 (HESF).

3.2. A thesis presented for a doctoral degree must demonstrate the requirements as per the AQF Level 10 criteria and demonstrate that the candidate has;

- conducted research independently at a high level of originality and quality,
- made a significant and original contribution to knowledge,
- an understanding of the relationship of the investigations undertaken and application to a wider field of knowledge, and
- substantial knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of learning.

3.3. A thesis presented for a masters by research degree must demonstrate the requirements as per the AQF Level 9 criteria and demonstrate that the candidate has:

- successfully undertaken supervised study,
- completed a program of research, research training and independent study,
- made a contribution to knowledge demonstrating a critical appreciation and understanding of the relationship of their own work to that of other work in the field, and
- applied an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts.

3.4. Candidates should also consult the University's Research Integrity and Compliance policies when preparing a thesis for examination. In particular, candidates should be aware of the following items which constitute examples of research misconduct:

- fabrication of data; that is, claiming results where none has been obtained.
- falsification of data, including changing records.
- plagiarism, including self-plagiarism.
- misleading or false attribution of authorship.
- failure to abide by University policy and procedural requirements for research (e.g. ethical compliance in respect of human or animal research ethics).

4. The Thesis

4.1. Thesis format and requirements

4.1.1. A HDR thesis submitted for examination must be written in English unless provided with an exemption by RHDC, and be of a satisfactory standard of literary presentation, including an accepted referencing system appropriate to the candidate's discipline area.

4.1.2. A HDR thesis must not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other qualification at Federation University or any other institution, nor any material previously published or written by any person (including the candidate), except where due reference is made and appropriate arrangements regarding copyright have been made.

4.1.3. HDR theses must be presented in one of the approved formats:

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

Requirements for the format of theses are set out in [Regulation 5.1](#) and the [HDR Theses and Examinations Procedure](#).

4.1.4. Candidates should consult with their supervisory panel for guidance regarding a chosen thesis style, and conventions for their discipline regarding formatting and referencing, before writing begins.⁴

4.1.5. 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.

4.1.6. A Masters Degree (Research) will normally be:

- a text of not more than 50,000 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.

4.1.7. Thesis word counts do not include appendices or references.

4.1.8. Candidates must submit for examination a PDF copy of their thesis. The presentation of the thesis is set out in the [HDR Theses and Examinations Procedure](#).

4.1.9. The thesis presented by a candidate for examination shall conform with the requirements of this section unless otherwise agreed by the RHDC.

4.2. Acknowledgements in the thesis

4.2.1. The thesis must include the following acknowledgements and statements, as applicable:

- acknowledgement of financial support, including support provided by the Australian Government as outlined in the [RTP Scholarship Policy](#).
- acknowledgements of industry engagement or access to external facilities to undertake the research,

- acknowledgement of the contribution provided by professional editing and proof-reading services,
- acknowledgement of contributions made by individuals to the thesis or research project.

4.3. Presentation of a thesis including publications

Candidates enrolled before 1st January 2019 should refer to the [HDR Candidature Management Policy](#) approved on 19th October 2015 for details on requirements for the thesis including publications. Section 4.3 applies to all candidates commencing on or after 1st January 2019.

4.3.1. Candidates may include published or submitted papers and book chapters in their thesis only where the following criteria are satisfied:

- the work is substantially the candidate's (typically evidenced by bearing the candidate's name as the primary author).
- the content is clearly related to the subject matter of the thesis, and contributes to the argument of the thesis,
- the thesis is presented in a manner that allows a cohesive research narrative, and
- the decision to include published material has been discussed with the supervisory team.

4.3.2. Papers selected for inclusion in a PhD or Masters thesis should be peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or refereed conference papers. Candidates submitting papers for publication during their candidature should select journals that are rigorously peer-reviewed and are highly suitable to their research area. Evidence of publication or acceptance should be included as an appendix to the thesis. A thesis including publications may include some chapters that are in preparation for submission for publication.

4.3.3. A PhD thesis incorporating publications would normally include at least three published or accepted chapters.

4.3.4. A Masters by Research thesis incorporating publications would normally include at least one published chapter or accepted chapters.

4.3.5. Research outputs that have been published or submitted for publication outside of the term of candidature may be included in the thesis. However, the following rules apply:

- the work must be accompanied by a statement confirming that it has not been presented for a previous qualification (either by the current candidate, or by any other person).
- Candidates should also be clearly aware that incorporation of previously published material may only form up to 66% of the thesis. Furthermore, inclusion of previously published work does not exempt candidates from their minimum study period as appropriate to the course being undertaken (as per the Regulation 5.1).

4.3.6. Requirements for Theses including publications are set out in the HDR Theses and Examination Procedure.

4.4. Presentation of a thesis comprising creative work and exegesis

4.4.1. A thesis submission may comprise creative work and exegesis or exegetical work. The extent of these two components within the thesis should be negotiated between the candidate and the supervision team, having regard to the academic requirements of the degree being sought. The thesis proportions, where designated comprise creative work and dissertation must be specified at confirmation and the dissertation component cannot be less than 25% of the work. In particular, the thesis plan that is presented as part of the confirmation of candidature milestone should include consideration of:

- the form and nature of the practice-based work
- overall volume and percentage weighting of work in the creative and exegetical components, and

- how the creative work or practice-based component can be 'examined' (for example, whether examiners may need to attend a live performance or exhibition).

4.4.2. 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 influence the examiners' assessment of the creative work. The exegesis and creative work must be examined as an integrated whole. A durable record of the performance or exhibition (electronic format) must be submitted with the thesis or within six weeks of submission of the thesis.

4.5. Use of proof-reading services

4.5.1. Professional proof-reading services may be engaged. Where candidates are seeking to employ professional editors, they are referred to the Institute of Professional Editors' 'Find an Editor' search tool for guidance in selecting proof-reading services. Funding for proof reading is the responsibility of the School of enrolment or of the candidates themselves.

4.5.2. The University follows the best practice guidelines recommended by the Australian Council of Graduate Research for engaging proof reading services prior to thesis submission. Candidates must refer to these Guidelines to understand the scope and limits of services that may be obtained, and obtain approval from the principal supervisor, prior to engaging professional proof-reading services.

5. Examination

5.1. Eligibility to submit for examination

All University staff and candidates involved in HDR thesis examination should have an understanding of the national best-practice [Graduate Research Good Practice Principles](#), as released by the [Australian Council of Graduate Research](#).

5.1.1. To be eligible to submit a thesis or exegesis for examination a candidate must:

- Be currently enrolled in a Higher Degree by Research program,
- Have been enrolled for at least the minimum period required as defined in Regulation 5.1 (one year full-time or part-time equivalent),
- Have completed the requirements of candidature as outlined in the Candidature Management Policy, and
- Have approval from the School Dean or nominee to submit the thesis.

5.2. Submission of thesis for examination

5.2.1. Candidates must complete and submit the Intention to Submit form at least four weeks prior to their intended submission date.

5.2.2. All theses submitted for examination must be accompanied by a completed Release of Thesis form, and include a statement of originality incorporating an acknowledgement of others' contributions, editorial assistance, copyright provisions, required summaries and other relevant approvals. A thesis will not be released for examination without these materials in place. For further guidance, candidates are directed to the [HDR Theses and Examination Procedure](#).

5.2.3. Normally, a candidate will submit a thesis for examination with the endorsement of the supervisory panel, as demonstrated by the signatures on the Release of Thesis form.

5.2.4. In certain circumstances, a candidate may submit a thesis for examination without the endorsement of the supervisory panel. Such a thesis will not be accepted unless the candidate has signed an acknowledgement outlining:

- an awareness of the reason/s for the supervisor's lack of endorsement of the thesis
- an awareness of the range of examination outcomes that are possible, and
- personal responsibility for the thesis result, including responsibility for any tuition fees applicable during a period of thesis revisions.

5.2.5. Once the thesis has been submitted for examination, the candidate is recorded as having a "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.

5.2.6. Resubmission of a thesis with post-examination revisions must occur within the timeframe designated by School Examination Committee.

5.2.7. Where the candidate requires further time to undertake post-examination revisions, a special case for consideration may be addressed to the DGRS.

5.2.8. The Graduate Research School is responsible for sending theses to the nominated examiners within a timely period.

5.3. Eligibility of Examiners

5.3.1. An individual may be or appointed as an examiner where they have:

- an appropriate disciplinary and academic background of relevance to the thesis content.
- be recognised as an international expert in the field or discipline of the thesis, and
- evidence of recent research activity, as demonstrated by peer-reviewed publications output, receipt of research funding and/or research training activity.

5.3.2. An individual would be expected to hold a Research Doctorate Degree (or equivalent to a Level 10 award under the [AQF](#)) in order to be appointed to an Examination Panel for either masters or doctoral candidates.

5.3.3. In exceptional circumstances, an examiner without a Research Doctorate may be acceptable, where it can be shown that they possess equivalent professional experience. The DGRS must approve exceptions.

5.3.4. Examiners must be external to the University. Current Emeritus Professors, adjuncts and honorary staff of the University are ineligible. Previous staff of the University may be eligible if at least five years has elapsed since their employment, and it is clear that the staff member has not interacted with the candidate and/or work being examined.

5.3.5. Current or previous supervisors of the candidate are not to be appointed as examiners.

5.3.6. Consideration will be made of the balance of expertise on the panel, and the independence of examiners. Generally, more than one examiner for a given thesis will not be appointed from the same institution, particularly if from the same unit (e.g. faculty or research centre).

5.4. Avoiding conflicts of interest

5.4.1. When nominating examiners, supervisors must consider conflicts of interest.

5.4.2. Examiners must declare any real or perceived conflict of interest (either professional, personal or commercial) that exists between the individual, the candidate and/or the supervisory panel. The DGRS will determine whether such a conflict results in ineligibility to serve on the Examination Panel.

5.4.3. All parties should consult the [Australian Council of Graduate Research's Guidelines for Managing Conflicts of Interest](#), which provides assistance in identifying major and minor types of conflict.

5.4.4. Where the DGRS becomes aware of a conflict of interest during the examination and/or prior to the release of the examination outcome to the candidate, the examiner may be stood down and/or their report may be considered ineligible.

5.5. Nomination and number of Examiners

5.5.1. Theses submitted for all HDR programs require a minimum of two external examiners, and at least one reserve external examiner.

5.5.2. The principal supervisor, in consultation with the supervisory panel, is responsible for nominating examiners.

5.5.3. The Recommendation of Examiners form should be submitted to the Graduate Research School for approval by the DGRS. The DGRS may consult with the relevant Associate Dean Research in considering such approvals.

5.5.4. Where examiners are unavailable or unresponsive to a request to examine, that examiner will be stood down and a reserve will be substituted to help ensure a timely examination process.

5.5.5. The University reserves the right to appoint the reservist as a third examiner for the purposes of:

- ensuring the examination panel has an appropriate depth and breadth of disciplinary expertise for the topic under examination, and/or
- providing additional information to assist in moderating the examination results (e.g. where the first two examiner's reports are divergent).

5.5.6. Where the latter case is applied, a third examiner would be introduced prior to the initial examination outcome being released to the candidate.

5.5.7. In the event that a thesis is being re-examined and new examiners are required, the process for nomination and appointment is as per sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3.

5.5.8. The nomination and appointment of examiners should be done in confidence. Supervisors may request that the candidate provide a list of examiners who are unsuitable (e.g. due to co-authorship); however, other than this, the candidate should not have any role in identifying or nominating prospective examiners. Participation of the candidate in the nomination process may result in one or more examiners being stood down.

5.6. Responsibilities of Examiners

5.6.1. Examiners have responsibility to:

- familiarise themselves with the requirements of Federation University's examinations process and the expectations of the [AQF](#), for the degree being examined.
- conduct the examination in a fair, rigorous and timely manner.
- declare any conflicts of interest of relevance to the examination.
- maintain confidentiality and refrain from discussing or distributing the thesis and, where applicable, supporting items.

- provide a clear recommendation to the Graduate Research School with respect to the category of examination outcome, and support this with a written report providing evidence for the decision, and
- respond to requests from the DGRS.

5.7. Timeliness of the examination period

5.7.1. Candidates and supervisors are advised that the expected time for an examination, from receipt of the submitted thesis to release of the moderated report to the candidate, is approximately 12 – 16 weeks.

5.7.2. Delays in the examination process can be introduced by:

- incomplete nomination forms,
- unresponsiveness of examiners in providing an outcome,
- the need to invite reserve examiners.

5.7.3. The Graduate Research School will make every effort to achieve a timely examination outcome. This will include regular engagement with appointed examiners, the introduction of a reserve examiner where one or more original examiners have become unresponsive, and timely processing of examination reports and moderation outcomes.

5.8. Categories of examination outcomes

5.8.1. Candidates may receive one of five possible examination outcomes, which are labelled and defined as per below:

- The thesis should be classified as PASSED without further examination; or
- The thesis should be classified as PASSED, subject to minor corrections made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board, that is, the thesis is suitable for conferral once the author has addressed nominated passages, textual errors, and referencing mistakes. These actions should largely be able to be undertaken independently by the candidate); or
- The thesis should be PASSED subject to major corrections made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board, that is, the thesis requires new data collection, new or revised data analysis, substantial rewriting of one or more chapters, or contains a large number of stylistic/presentation errors. These actions should be undertaken with ongoing input from the supervisory team, or
- The thesis should be classified as DEFERRED; the thesis requires substantial revision and re-examination by external experts and the Candidate should be permitted to submit the thesis for examination in a revised form; or
- The thesis should be classified as FAILED.

5.8.2. A candidate who receives either:

- PASSED, subject to major corrections, or
- DEFERRED

may be required to re-enrol for a minimum period of six calendar months. The candidate is responsible for meeting any applicable tuition costs associated with a period of re-enrolment to effect major revisions.

5.9. Post-examination responsibilities

5.9.1. The Graduate Research School is responsible for

- administering and compiling Examiner Reports for review by the DGRS,
- notifying the Chair, School Examination Committee (SEC) to convene the SEC,

- administering approval for the Recommendation of Award, and
- ensuring the Recommendation of Award is included in the Academic Board minutes for noting.

5.9.2. The DGRS is responsible for:

- Completing the DGRS Report to provide the SEC with a recommendation based on the Examiner's Reports.

5.9.3. The Chair, SEC is responsible for:

- Reviewing the DGRS report and referring DGRS Reports to the SEC for further consideration, where required,
- Providing Candidates and Principal Supervisors with a recommended course of action within seven days of receiving the DGRS Report, except where the recommendation is referred to RHDC,
- Referring recommendations to RHDC where the SEC recommends that the thesis be deferred or failed and the DGRS Report differed.
- Notifying the GRS of the SEC recommendation.
- providing Candidates and Principal Supervisors with a recommended course of action for the Candidates after thesis examination.

5.9.4. The School Examination Committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing the DGRS Report when referred from the Chair, SEC and recommending a course of action for the Candidate.
- Notifying the GRS of the recommended course of action
- approving the Summary of Revisions and the thesis after corrections or amendments have been made, where required,
- approving theses for re-examination by external examiners, where required,
- advising the Graduate Research School to send the thesis to a third examiner, where required,
- approving thesis summaries for publication in graduation documents, and
- providing a final recommended examination outcome via the Results Recommendation Form to the Chair, RHDC and Chair, Academic Board.

5.9.5. The Chair, RHDC is responsible for:

- Reviewing the recommended outcome from the SEC; and
- Referring the recommended outcome back to the SEC where approval has not been granted, or
- Approving the recommended outcome for referral to the Chair, Academic Board

5.9.6. The Chair, Academic Board is responsible for:

- Approving the recommended outcome for referral to the next meeting of Academic Board

5.10. School examination committee

5.10.1. The Associate Dean, Research of the School of enrolment convenes the School Examination Committee upon being notified by the Graduate Research School.

5.10.2. The School Examination Committee should comprise of at least three people. Members should:

- be University staff members who hold registration as a principal supervisors,
- have tenure for at least as long as the expected duration of the examination,
- hold a Research Doctorate (or other qualification equivalent to [AQF Level 10](#)), and
- have sufficient experience to be able to ensure rigour and quality within the examinations process.

5.11. The examination recommendation

5.11.1. The DGRS receives the Examiner Reports and provides a recommendation to the SEC via the Chair, SEC in the form of a DGRS Report. The Dean, GRS may request additional information from any examiner, supervisor or discipline expert.

- The Dean, GRS may recommend an examination outcome (see 6.8 Categories of examination outcomes) or, where examiner reports differ, the appointment of a third examiner.
- The recommendation must be based only on materials formally submitted by the Candidate for the examination.
- The DGRS reserves the right to redact the examiner's comments prior to release to the candidate and/or the supervisory panel. Where this occurs, recipients will be notified that the report has been provided in an abridged version.

5.11.2. The Chair, SEC, is responsible for reviewing the Examiner Reports and the DGRS Report.

- The Chair, SEC, may refer the DGRS Report to the SEC for further consideration where necessary, or confirm the recommendation in the DGRS report and communicate this directly to the Principal Supervisor and Candidate, copying the GRS in this communication.
- Where a confirmed recommendation is that thesis examination be *deferred* or that the thesis be passed subject to corrections, the SEC must oversee the candidate completion plan and timeline for re-submission or correction of the thesis.
- Where the Chair, SEC refers the report to the SEC, the SEC may recommend an outcome which differs from the recommendation of the DGRS. In this case:
 - The GRS should be informed of the SEC recommendation.
 - The SEC should notify the Principal Supervisor and the Candidate.
 - Where the SEC's recommendation is to defer or fail the thesis, and this differs from the recommendation in the DGRS Report, the Chair, SEC must refer the recommendation to RHDC for consideration before advising the Principal Supervisor and candidate.
- Where the SEC requests that the thesis be sent to a third examiner, the SEC will advise the Graduate Research School to send the thesis to the reserve examiner. The SEC will advise the Principal Supervisor of this action.

5.12. Undertaking revisions

5.12.1. Where corrections or revisions are required, the candidate is responsible for preparing a revised thesis, together with the Corrections Template to respond to the examiners' comments. This should be submitted through the Graduate Research School to the SEC. In responding to revisions, the candidate should clearly indicate any amendments made, and a rationale for adopting (or not adopting) the recommendations provided in the examiners' report.

5.12.2. Candidates should note that having published sections of the thesis in a peer-reviewed format is not, on its own, an adequate defence for not actioning suggested changes to unpublished sections.

5.12.3. Corrected theses are submitted to the School Examination Committee which must complete the Results Recommendation Form and confirm that the thesis is ready for a Recommendation of Award.

5.13. Requirements for thesis re-examination

5.13.1. Where a candidate receives a result of *deferred*, the principal supervisor is required to submit a covering page to the SEC, detailing the revisions made and the overall impact of these on the cogency and original contribution of the thesis (appropriate to the degree being sought).

5.13.2. Where an examination outcome of *deferred* is confirmed by the SEC, the following will apply:

- where the original thesis examiner/s have indicated a willingness to re-examine, they will normally be invited to re-examine the thesis.
- where one or more of the original thesis examiners are unwilling or unavailable, nominations for new examiners will be sought from the principal supervisor, as per section 5.5. The replacement examiners will be notified that the thesis is being submitted for re-examination.
- The re-examiners will receive the University's advice to the candidate for the revision of the thesis, including the original examiners' reports and an integrated list of revisions as agreed to by the candidate and the supervisor and approved by the SEC; and 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 re-examiners will be asked to assess this material against the relevant [AQF](#) descriptors relevant to the degree being sought, without consideration of any prior materials submitted by the candidate.

5.13.3. A research thesis which is undergoing external re-examination is eligible for only one of three examination outcomes:

Passed: except for minor textual errors and/or minor corrections to referencing, the thesis is suitable for immediate conferral

Passed subject to corrections: the thesis is suitable for conferral once the author has addressed nominated passages, textual errors, referencing corrections. Such corrections will be made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board; or

Failed: the thesis is not suitable for conferral.

5.13.4. Where, following consideration of the reports of the examiners, it is determined that a thesis does not meet the standard expected for a PhD, but the Research Higher Degree Committee (RHDC) is satisfied that the research is of suitable merit, the RHDC may recommend that the appropriate masters degree be awarded. The award of the masters degree is subject to the acceptance of that degree by the candidate and any such conditions as specified by the RHDC.

5.13.5. Following re-examination, the DGRS shall receive the examination reports, and provide a moderated recommendation to the SEC. In arriving at their decision, the Dean may request additional information from any examiner, either in written format or via an interview.

5.13.6. Following re-examination, the DGRS may recommend only one of the re-examination outcomes listed in 5.13.3 and follow the requirements as set out in section 5.11.

5.14. Oral defence

5.14.1. An oral defence is not mandatory at Federation University. However, at the request of the School Examination Committee, candidate and/or the DGRS, the candidate may be required to:

- conduct an oral presentation explaining the thesis findings, context, and contribution to the research discipline, and/or
- participate in an interview to confirm that all revisions have been completed to the satisfaction of the School Examination Committee and DGRS.

5.14.2. If required, the oral defence shall serve the purpose of confirming or moderating the outcome of the thesis revisions process. The presentation itself does not attract a separate assessment report.

5.14.3. Such an interview may take place in person, or by tele- or video-conference.

5.15. Thesis summaries

5.15.1. The Candidate must submit two thesis summaries:

- 300 word abstract of their thesis in plain language
- 30 word summary for the Graduation Booklet.

5.15.2. Summaries must be submitted to the SEC for approval.

5.16. Recommendation of awards

5.16.1. Once revisions have been completed (where required) the School Examination Committee will complete the Results Recommendation Form, approve the summaries and submit them to the Graduate Research School.

5.16.2. The Graduate Research School obtains final approval for Recommendation of Award from the Chair, RHDC and the Chair, Academic Board.

5.17. Examinations undertaken in-confidence

5.17.1. In the event that a thesis contains sensitive or potentially patentable research results, the University shall ensure that examiners sign an appropriate confidentiality agreement prior to examining the thesis. The University shall take whatever other action is necessary to protect patentable material contained in theses in a way which will not introduce undue delay in the awarding of the degree.

5.18. Payment of honoraria

5.18.1. Examiners shall be eligible to receive an honorarium payment consistent with the rates applied for the examination of research theses, as published by Universities Australia from time to time. The honoraria will be paid only after receipt of an examination report (and would be offered to any examiner who has supplied a report, even if that report is later set aside).

5.19. Appeals

5.19.1. A candidate, supervisor or examiner who has reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction with any formal decision made under this policy or procedure may lodge an appeal by written request to the DGRS, within 28 days of date of issue of the decision. If the candidate or supervisor can demonstrate that due process was not followed or that new evidence is available, they may lodge an additional internal appeal with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

5.19.2. With regard to matters relating to academic assessment, a candidate who has reasonable grounds for dissatisfaction with any formal decision may appeal. Appeals processes can be found in the Academic Appeals Policy and Academic Appeals Procedure.

Supporting Documents

[HDR Candidate Selection Policy](#)

[HDR Candidature Management Policy](#)

[HDR Candidature Management Procedure](#)

[HDR Supervision Policy](#)

[HDR Theses and Examinations Procedure](#)

[Higher Education Deferral or Leave from Studies Procedure](#)

[Higher Education Graduate Attributes Policy](#)

[Regulation 5.1](#)

[Responsibilities for Supervision of HDR Candidates Procedure](#)

[Selection and Awarding of HDR Place Procedure](#)

[Student Appeal Policy](#)

[Student Appeal Procedure](#)

[Student Complaints Policy](#)

[Student Complaints Procedure](#)

[Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Candidates Procedure](#)

[Withdrawal from All Studies Procedure \(Higher Education\)](#)

Responsibility

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) holds overall responsibility for ensuring research is undertaken in accordance with this Policy and the accompanying Procedures.

Others who have responsibility for ensuring compliance with this Policy include:

- Dean, Graduate Research Schools.
- Deans or Nominees of Academic Schools
- Associate Deans of Research or Nominees
- Graduate Research School
- Candidates
- Principle Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, Co-Supervisors, Provisional Principle Supervisors
- Examiners
- Research by Higher Degree Committee

Promulgation

The HDR Theses Examination Policy 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.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. information Sessions; and/or
2. training Sessions.