



Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Thesis Examination Procedures

1. COMPLIANCE OBLIGATION SUPPORTED

[Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Thesis Examination Policy](#)

2. PROCEDURAL DETAILS

2.1. Administration of HDR thesis examinations

- 2.1.1. The Graduate Research School (GRS) is responsible for the administration of these procedures and in particular the administration of the process of examination of all Higher Degree by Research (HDR) theses.
- 2.1.2. The thesis is submitted and the examination process commences when GRS receives:
 - (a) from the student, the thesis; and
 - (b) from the Enrolling School, the completed Thesis Submission form, with all required attachments and permissions.
- 2.1.3. A student who has been granted credit during application for admission to a HDR course (see [Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Admission and Enrolment Procedures](#)) may not submit a thesis for examination earlier than the equivalent of one year of full-time study after Milestone 1 has been approved, other than in exceptional circumstances as approved by the Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Excellence (ADVCRE).

2.2. Nomination and appointment of examiners

- 2.2.1. The supervisor will, following consultation with the Thesis Chair and no later than 6 weeks prior to a student's intended thesis submission date, nominate examiners, ensuring:
 - (a) that the nominated examiners are not and have not been at any time a supervisor of the student;
 - (b) that the nominated examiners have obtained the equivalent or higher degree as that being examined or have been deemed by the ADVCRE as having relevant and equivalent professional experience;
 - (c) for doctoral students, examiners must be external to the University and for masters students at least one examiner must be external to the University, and;
 - (d) that the Thesis Chair takes all reasonable steps to ensure that examiners have disclosed and are appropriately managing any conflicts of interest (in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest Procedures](#)) and will preserve the integrity and independence of the examination process.
- 2.2.2. After consideration of the nominations, at least two examiners will be invited to examine the thesis by the ADVCRE and if agreeable, will be appointed by the ADVCRE.
- 2.2.3. Examiners are expected to complete an examination of the thesis within six weeks of receipt. If an examiner is unable to complete the examination within this period, the Thesis Chair or the Director of Graduate Research of the Enrolling School (DGR) may recommend a replacement examiner to the ADVCRE.
- 2.2.4. The ADVCRE may appoint a replacement examiner, or adjudicator as appropriate, in any of the following circumstances:
 - (a) where an examiner or adjudicator is unable to continue their involvement in an examination or re-examination for any reason;
 - (b) where an examiner or adjudicator has actual or perceived bias with respect to the student, the supervisor or the University in their report(s) or otherwise; and

- (c) where the examiner or adjudicator has not engaged in the examination or re-examination with diligence or appropriate expertise.

2.2.5. The name of an examiner is not to be released to the student until after the examination process is completed and then only if the examiner specifically approves the release of their identity or where the University is required to by law.

2.3. Thesis requirements

2.3.1. **Form:** a thesis must be based on research conducted during the period of enrolment and must be submitted in a format appropriate to the type of thesis, being one of the following forms:

- (a) a standard thesis;
- (b) a thesis by creative works accompanied by an exegesis; or
- (c) a thesis by compilation.

2.3.2. **Word limit:** unless otherwise approved by the ADVCRE:

- (a) a standard thesis or thesis by compilation must not exceed 100 000 words for a Doctoral HDR course or 60 000 words for a Masters HDR Course.
- (b) an exegesis accompanying a thesis by creative works must not exceed 40 000 words for a Doctoral HDR course or 20 000 words for a Masters HDR Course.

These word limits exclude all footnotes, appendices, tables and illustrative matter and the reference list.

2.3.3. **Format:** a thesis must be submitted to the GRS:

- (a) for a thesis in the form specified by section 2.3.1 (a) and (c), as an electronic Portable Document Format (PDF); and
- (b) for a thesis in the form specified by section 2.3.1(b):
 - (i) for the creative works, in a format specified by the Thesis Chair; and
 - (ii) for the exegesis, as an electronic Portable Document Format (PDF).

2.3.4. **Language:** a thesis must be submitted in Standard English. Any exceptions require (a) the recommendation of the DGR to the ADVCRE and (b) the approval of the ADVCRE, who may require that the thesis be accompanied by a translation into Standard English.

2.3.5. **Formatting:** a thesis in the form specified by section 2.3.1 (a) and (c), and the exegesis as specified by section 2.3.1(b), must be formatted accordingly:

- (a) the thesis should be 12-point font, one-and-a-half line spaced, A4-sized, with ~2cm margins, and sequentially numbered pages;
- (b) if an examiner requires a hard copy, double-sided printing is recommended;
- (c) if the student wishes to bind their final thesis, the [Thesis Permanent Binding](#) form should be followed.

2.3.6. **Title page:** a thesis in the form specified by section 2.3.1 (a) and (c), and the exegesis as specified by section 2.3.1(b), must contain a title page that states the student's full legal name, the title of the thesis, and the year of submission for examination or re-examination.

2.3.7. **Declaration:** the page immediately following the title page must contain a declaration as follows:

"To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for any other degree or diploma in any university".

This declaration must be signed and dated by the student (and for any re-examination, signed and dated by the student with the date of the resubmission).

- 2.3.8. **Acknowledgement:** a thesis must acknowledge:
- (a) the sources from which the student's information is derived;
 - (b) the extent to which the work of others has been used; and
 - (c) the assistance of individuals, associations or institutions,
- generally in a preface or introduction, in attribution statements included in the front matter of the thesis, and in references and appendices as relevant.
- 2.3.9. **Statement from principal supervisor:** a thesis is typically submitted for examination or re-examination with a statement from the principal supervisor recommending that the thesis be sent for examination or re-examination. Where a student submits a thesis for examination or re-examination without such a statement, appropriate advice is to be given to the student by the ADVCRE prior to the thesis being sent for examination or re-examination.
- 2.3.10. **Confidentiality:** the ADVCRE may, on recommendation from the Thesis Chair or Dean of Graduate Research, declare a thesis to be confidential for a period normally not exceeding five years where the thesis contains material that may reasonably affect the security of persons, nations, industry or commerce.
- 2.3.11. **Copyright:** a student, subject to University's [Intellectual Property Policy](#) and [Procedures](#), is to own the copyright in their thesis.
- 2.3.12. In preparing a thesis for submission, students should fully consider the [Guidelines for Thesis Preparation and Submission](#).

2.4. Thesis examination

- 2.4.1. Examiners are to be supplied with an electronic copy of the thesis by the GRS. On request and in exceptional cases, a printed copy may be supplied. Printing and postage costs are the responsibility of the Enrolling School.
- 2.4.2. While the thesis is under examination, the only people who may communicate with an examiner regarding the examination process are the ADVCRE, Dean of Graduate Research, Thesis Chair or a Graduate Studies Officer.
- 2.4.3. The Thesis Chair may communicate with an examiner in any of the following circumstances:
- (a) to clarify any aspect of a report which may conflict with other reports;
 - (b) to clarify any aspect of a report which may affect the overall classification of the thesis;
 - (c) to ascertain the status of a report during the examination process; and
 - (d) when requested to do so by the Dean of Graduate Research or the ADVCRE.
- 2.4.4. Each examiner is to submit to the Thesis Chair an independent, written report on the merits of the thesis which is to contain an assessment of the thesis in relation to the stated thesis objectives, the level and criteria as specified by the Australian Qualifications Framework and the [Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Thesis Examination Policy](#). The written report is to also contain one of the following recommended classifications for the thesis:
- (a) **Pass:**
 - (i) pass with no requirement for correction or amendments other than minor typographical and editorial matters;
 - (ii) pass subject to minor content, textual and/or structural amendments being made to the satisfaction of the Thesis Chair; or
 - (iii) pass subject to major content, textual and/or structural amendments being made to the satisfaction of the Thesis Chair;
 - (b) **Re-examine:** submit for re-examination, where the thesis is to be revised and submitted for re-examination. The examiner may specify this category for a thesis which requires major or substantive amendment. In the report, the examiner is to provide detailed guidance to the student to assist revision; or

- (c) **Fail:** fail without right to resubmit the thesis, on the basis that a significant amount of additional research work and/or major, substantive revision would not raise the thesis to an acceptable standard.
- 2.4.5. An examiner may be replaced if the examination is not completed within the period specified in section 2.2.4.
- 2.4.6. Where the examiners' reports do not allow the Thesis Chair to determine an examination result based on a clear weight of opinion, the Thesis Chair, having discussed the reports with the supervisors, may recommend to the ADVCRE (via the DGR):
- (a) the appointment of an adjudicator (see section 2.5); or
 - (b) an oral examination of the student (see section 2.6).
- 2.4.7. Where:
- (a) the examiners' reports allow the Thesis Chair to determine an examination result based on a clear weight of opinion;
 - (b) the Thesis Chair has received an adjudicator's report; or
 - (c) the Thesis Chair has received an oral examination panel's report, the Thesis Chair, having discussed the reports with the supervisors, is to recommend to the ADVCRE (via the DGR) that the thesis be classified in accordance with the classification set out in section 2.4.4.
- 2.4.8. Where the Thesis Chair recommends a thesis be classified as **pass** (under section 2.4.4(a)), the Thesis Chair is to request in writing that the student undertakes minor or major amendments to the thesis in a manner which addresses the examiners' comments and return the amended thesis, together with a statement that sets out the amendments that have been made. The length of period for an amendment of a thesis is to be determined by the Thesis Chair, and is not to exceed -three months from the date of notification to the student.
- 2.4.9. Where the Thesis Chair recommends a thesis be classified as **re-examined** (under section 2.4.4(b)):
- 2.4.9.1. the Thesis Chair is to request in writing that the student undertakes major amendments to the thesis in a manner which addresses the examiners' comments and submits the revised thesis to the GRS for re-examination, together with a statement that sets out the amendments that have been made. The length of period for a revision of a thesis for re-examination is to be determined by the Thesis Chair, and is not to exceed six months from the date of notification to the student;
 - 2.4.9.2. the Dean of Research (Chair of the Faculty Committee or delegate) is to review the student's response to the re-examiner/s, prior to resubmission;
 - 2.4.9.3. on receipt of a revised thesis for re-examination, the examiners are to submit to the Thesis Chair a written report containing a recommended classification of either pass (under section 2.4.4(a)) or fail (under section 2.4.4(c)) and cannot contain a recommended classification of re-examine (under section 2.4.4(b)); and
 - 2.4.9.4. The Thesis Chair will consider the examiners' reports and make a determination per 2.4.6 and 2.4.7, except they may not make a recommendation of re-examine (2.4.4(b)).
- 2.4.10. Where the Thesis Chair proposes to recommend a thesis be classified as **fail** (under section 2.4.4(c)), the Thesis Chair is to first discuss the grounds for this proposed recommendation with the supervisors prior to submitting the recommendation to the DGR.
- 2.4.11. The Thesis Chair's recommendation will be submitted to the ADVCRE, via the DGR, on the approved Thesis Chair Report form.
- 2.4.12. When the DGR receives a Thesis Chair report, the DGR is to ensure that the Thesis Chair role has been performed appropriately and that the Thesis Chair

report has been appropriately completed prior to forwarding the Thesis Chair's recommendation to the ADVCRE.

2.4.13. The ADVCRE is to consider the recommendation of the Thesis Chair regarding the classification of the thesis and:

- (a) where the ADVCRE accepts a recommendation that the student has satisfied all the requirements the ADVCRE is to make a recommendation to Council that the HDR be awarded; or
- (b) where the ADVCRE does not accept the recommendation from the Thesis Chair regarding the classification of the thesis, the Thesis Chair is to be requested to provide additional information regarding the classification. The ADVCRE is to consider the additional information and determine the classification of the thesis as appropriate.

2.4.14. The Graduations Office will convey to the student the decision of Council to confer the HDR.

2.5. Using an adjudicator in the examination process

2.5.1. On the recommendation of the Thesis Chair the ADVCRE may appoint an adjudicator to adjudicate between examiners' reports.

2.5.2. In consideration of a thesis:

- (a) which has not been submitted for re-examination, the report of the adjudicator must recommend a classification of pass (under section 2.4.4(a)), re-examine (under section 2.4.4(b)) or fail (under section 2.4.4(c)); or
- (b) which has been submitted for re-examination the report of the adjudicator must recommend a classification of pass (under section 2.4.4(a)) or fail (under section 2.4.4(c)) and a recommendation of re-examine (under section 2.4.4(b)) cannot not be made.

2.5.3. The report of the adjudicator is to be conveyed by the GRS to the Thesis Chair who is to then make a recommendation under section 2.4.7.

2.6. Oral examination

2.6.1. An oral examination panel is to include at least two examiners appointed under section 2.2.

2.6.2. The examiners of the oral examination are to convene, in private, immediately following the oral examination to consider the student's responses and are to recommend to the Thesis Chair a classification for the thesis of pass (under section 2.4.4(a)) or fail (under section 2.4.4(c)) and a recommendation of re-examine (under section 2.4.4(b)) cannot not be made. The Thesis Chair is then to make a recommendation under section 2.4.7.

2.6.3. All costs involved in the conduct of an oral examination will be the responsibility of the Enrolling School.

2.7. Distribution of the thesis

2.7.1. In order for a thesis to be classified as passed by the ADVCRE, a digital format copy of the finalised thesis must be submitted to the University Library for retention in the institutional repository (espace).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities are as set out in section 2.

4. SCOPE OF PROCEDURES

These procedures apply to all staff, students and HDR supervisors, examiners and adjudicators involved with HDR courses at Australian and global campuses.

5. DEFINITIONS

(Note: Commonly defined terms are located in the [Curtin Common Definitions](#). Any defined terms below are specific to this document)

Adjudicator

An academic, external to the University, appointed to adjudicate on examiners' recommendations.

Milestone 1 and 3

Milestone 1 and 3 have the same meaning as in the *Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Student Progression Procedures*.

6. SCHEDULES

Nil

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS/LINKS/FORMS

Internal

- [Authorship, Peer Review and Publication of Research Outputs Policy](#) and [Procedures](#)
- [Research Data and Primary Materials Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Procedures](#)
- [Intellectual Property Policy](#) and [Procedures](#)
- [Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Admission and Enrolment Procedures](#)
- [Higher Degree by Research \(HDR\) Student Progression Procedures](#)
- [Guidelines for Thesis Preparation and Submission](#)

External

- [Higher Education Support Act 2003 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2015 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 \(Cth\)](#)

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REVISION HISTORY (filled out by Compliance Services)

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New	Approved	04/08/2020	Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research	EM2042	Effective upon gazettal of Statute 12 (24/07/2020) and promulgation of the Admission and Enrolment (HDR) Rules (03/08/2020) and relevant policy
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