



# Procedure: Higher Degree by Research: Submission and Examination of Theses

## Purpose

This document describes the thesis submission and examination procedures for the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs Master of Philosophy, Professional Doctorate, or Doctor of Philosophy.

## Procedure

### General

1. This document should be read in conjunction with the [Research Awards Rule](#).
2. In cases where a Delegated Authority is also primary supervisor for a candidate, the Associate Dean appoints an alternate individual to be a Delegated Authority under the Research Awards Rules for the purposes of that candidate.
3. If at any stage of the submission or examination process an allegation of academic misconduct is raised it is investigated under [the Academic Integrity Rule 2021](#). Advice is available from [policy.regs@anu.edu.au](mailto:policy.regs@anu.edu.au).

### Pre-Submission of Thesis

#### *Oral Presentation*

4. An oral presentation is a required milestone, which is completed satisfactorily prior to the submission of a thesis. For further details, please refer to the [HDR Candidature Progression procedure](#).

#### *Notification of Intent to Submit*

5. Two months prior to submission, and after consulting their supervisory panel, a candidate should commence the Notification of Intent to Submit (NOI) milestone containing:
  - a. Candidate name;
  - b. Candidate ID;
  - c. Thesis title;

- d. Date on which the thesis is expected to be submitted; and
  - e. Confirmation from the primary supervisor that the candidate has consulted with their panel
6. If the intended submission date changes, the candidate uses the ISIS [Manage My Degree eForm](#) to update their intended submission date.

#### *Early Submission*

7. A candidate wishing to submit prior to the minimum duration for the program specified in the *Research Awards Rule* must obtain the approval of the Delegated Authority for early submission, prior to the submission date.

#### *Format - Length*

8. The maximum length for a Doctor of Philosophy thesis is 100,000 words and a Master of Philosophy or Professional Doctorate is 60,000 words. This figure is exclusive of footnotes, tables, figures, maps, bibliographies and appendices, but appendices must be limited to material necessary in support of the main argument of the thesis.
9. Prior to notification of intention to submit, the Delegated Authority may approve:
- a. A new length for theses in excess of this length;
  - b. An alternate format for expressing the maximum requirement - such as page count - if words are not an appropriate measure.

#### *Format - Content*

10. The first page of the thesis gives its title, the candidate's name in full and the month and year of its submission for examination. It includes the statement:

"A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor [or Master, as appropriate] of  
Philosophy of The Australian National University."

11. It also includes a copyright notice providing the full legal name of the author, centred at the bottom of the page:

© Copyright by [Candidate's Full Name] [Year]

All Rights Reserved

12. The second page contains a statement signed by the candidate, indicating the extent to which the thesis is their own original work, if the research is conducted jointly with another person, clearly indicates the nature and extent of the candidate's contribution to the research, and a word count or equivalent.
13. Acknowledgments are included in the following pages.
14. Third party editorial advice is provided as per the *Guideline: Higher Degree by Research - Editing of Theses*.

15. When third party editorial advice has been provided the name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered is printed in the acknowledgements as per the [Australian standards for editing practice](#). If the third party editor's current or former area of academic specialisation is similar to that of the candidate, this is also stated in the acknowledgements.
16. An abstract of 250-500 words is on the page or pages following the acknowledgement. The electronic version of the abstract must use standard text only.
17. A table of contents appears following the abstract.
18. A bibliography of works to which reference has been made is included at the end of the thesis. The bibliographical standards applied are consistent with the discipline.

### *Thesis in Standard Format*

19. A thesis submitted in standard format is of International Standards Organisation (ISO) A4 size (297mm x 210mm), unless the diagrams, tables etc. do not fit appropriately on this size, in which case it may be printed on ISO B4 size (353mm x 250mm).
20. The format of text in a thesis:
  - a. Is double spaced or one and a half spaced. Single spacing is used only for indented quotations, footnotes and bibliographies.
  - b. Is in a font that is easy to read, and no smaller than 11 points for text and 9 points for footnote text. For a digital thesis, it is recommended the use of Arial or another Sans-Serif font. For more information, please refer to the [ANU Style Guide](#).
  - c. All margins are with header and footing settings as 2.5cm from the top and bottom:

<b>Format</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Margin</b>
For all digital theses	All four margins	2.5cm
Where hard examination copies are requested by examiners - single-sided printing	Left side	4 cm
	Top, right, and bottom sides	2cm
Where hard examination copies are requested by examiners - double-sided	Odd page, left side	4 cm
	Odd page, top, right, and bottom sides	2cm
	Even page, right side	4 cm
	Even page, top, left , and bottom sides	2cm

### *Thesis by Compilation*

21. The format of a thesis by compilation is outlined in the [HDR Thesis by Compilation and Thesis by Creative Works Procedure.](#)

### *Thesis in an Alternative Format*

22. A thesis is in an alternative format if it consists of, or includes, video recordings, film or other works of visual or sonic arts, computer software, digital material or other non-written material.

23. Candidates intending to submit for examination a thesis in an alternative format obtain endorsement from their supervisory panel, and approval from the Delegated Authority about the format of their thesis more than 12 months prior to submission, and no later than 6 months prior to submission.

### *Thesis by Creative Works*

24. The submission of a thesis by creative works is undertaken as per the *HDR Thesis by Compilation and Thesis by Creative Works Procedure.*

### *Use of Confidential Material*

25. Use of confidential information in a thesis is according to the [Use of Confidential or Restricted Information Theses procedure.](#)

### *Submission Process*

26. One electronic copy is submitted via an eForm provided for access by appointed examiners.

### *Supervisor's Endorsement*

27. The primary supervisor confirms to the HDR Examinations office that the thesis is in the correct format for submission and determines whether to endorse submission of the thesis. Where a primary supervisor considers that a thesis will experience difficulty in the examination process, they do not endorse its submission.

28. The primary supervisor certifies whether to the best of their knowledge the candidate has complied with the University's rules and regulations relating to candidature for the degree.

29. The supervisor's endorsement confirms that the thesis title and abstract provided by the candidate are correct.

### *Submission without Supervisor's Endorsement*

30. Where a primary supervisor does not endorse the submission of a thesis and a candidate still wishes to submit, the primary supervisor provides a statement to the

Delegated Authority indicating why they do not believe the thesis suitable for submission to examiners.

31. The Delegated Authority will organise for the thesis to be reviewed by a member of academic staff who is not the primary supervisor.
32. On receipt of advice from the member of academic staff, the Delegated Authority will:
  - a. Meet with, and provide advice to, the candidate; and
  - b. Provide written feedback from the reader including advice on the suitability for submission to the candidate.
33. If the candidate still wishes to submit without the endorsement of their supervisor, the submission and examination process proceeds as per the standard process. The Delegated Authority will recommend examiners on behalf of the Primary Supervisor. Examiners must not be notified that the thesis has been submitted without the endorsement of the supervisor and the University until a final outcome of the examination process is determined by the Associate Dean, and the award of the degree is determined.

## **Thesis Examination**

### *Appointment of Examiners*

34. The [Nomination of Examiners form](#) is completed once a candidate provides a notification of intent to submit but before they submit their thesis.
35. A candidate is entitled to suggest potential examiners to their supervisor, and to provide the names of persons that they would prefer not to examine the thesis. A candidate is not entitled to be informed of whether their suggestions have been followed in the appointment of the examiners.
36. Supervisors confirm the expected availability of examiners prior to completing the Nomination of Examiners form.
37. A minimum of two external expert examiners who have international standing are appointed by the Associate Dean on the recommendation of the Delegated Authority.
38. Three or more examiners may be appointed to provide the necessary breadth of expertise for the research topic.
39. Examiners are of international standing in a discipline relevant to the thesis research with some experience in examining theses. International standing may be demonstrated through a number of means including but not limited to:
  - a. Publication record;
  - b. Employment record;
  - c. Contribution to the field; and

d. Peer regard and esteem measures.

40. If an examiner agrees to their nomination, they are informed of any changes to the proposed submission date. An alternate examiner is appointed by the Associate Dean if the initial examiner is no longer available due to a change in submission date.

41. An additional examiner may be appointed by the Associate Dean on the recommendation of the Delegated Authority subsequent to the initial appointment:

a. To resolve disagreements in the thesis examination process; or

b. In cases where an examiner's report has not been received for an extended period of time. The examiner has been withdrawn and has been notified by GRO.

42. In determining the award of the degree, all examiners reports received are considered.

### *Conflict of Interest*

43. Any examiner conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest must be declared to the Associate Dean by anyone who becomes aware of it, and may include but is not limited to:

a. Involvement with the project on which the thesis is presented;

b. Collaboration with the candidate or members of the supervisory panel within the last five years;

c. A close personal relationship with the candidate or members of the supervisory panel;

d. A financial or personal prestige interest in the outcomes of the research;

e. Ethical, personal, political or religious views that may be in conflict with the thesis or marking process; or

f. Ownership of or employment with an organisation directly affected by the research.

44. On receiving notification of an actual or potential conflict of interest the Associate Dean discusses the potential conflict with relevant parties, which must include the Delegated Authority, and also includes (but is not limited to):

a. The supervisory panel including primary supervisor and chair of panel; and/or

b. The examiner.

45. On the basis of those discussions, the Associate Dean determines whether:

a. A prima facie conflict of interest exists and so excludes the relevant examiner from the examination process; or

b. That no prima facie conflict of interest exists and allows the examiner to continue in their role.

46. If it is unclear whether a conflict of interest exists, the relevant examiner is to be excluded from the examination process

47. The rationale for any determination is recorded on the candidate file.

### *Examination Process*

48. Examiners of Theses submitted in standard format or as a thesis by compilation, are provided a copy of the thesis and the University guidelines for Examination of HDR Theses, and are requested to examine the thesis and return a report within two months.

49. Once a candidate has submitted their thesis for examination:

- a. Except in the course of an oral examination, an examiner must not knowingly communicate about the research, the thesis or the process of examination directly with the candidate until the thesis has been approved for award;
- b. Except in the course of an oral examination, a candidate must not knowingly communicate directly with an examiner about the research, the thesis or the process of examination until the thesis has been approved for award;
- c. In the case of an oral examination communications between the examiner and the candidate will be confined to the scheduled oral examination meeting;
- d. Supervisors must not knowingly communicate about the research, the thesis or the process of examination with examiners until the thesis has been approved for award;
- e. Examiners must not knowingly communicate about the research, the thesis or the process of examination with the supervisor until the thesis has been approved for award;
- f. Examiners must not knowingly disclose the content of a thesis to an external party until a thesis has been approved for award, subject to clause 51;
- g. Examiners are able to ask for clarification of any material in the thesis through the Graduate Research Office who will seek advice subject to clause 52.

50. Communications are subject to any approvals under the *HDR Use of Confidential or Restricted Information in Theses procedure*.

51. The Associate Dean may, at the request of an examiner, nominate a person other than a member of the Supervisory Panel to provide further information about the thesis or, in the case of joint work, the candidate's contribution to the thesis. The Associate Dean or the nominee may seek advice from the Supervisory Panel.

52. Examiners make one of the following four recommendations after completing the examination of the thesis:

- a. that the candidate be granted the award; or
- b. that the candidate be granted the award subject to corrections or revisions required by the examiners in the thesis to be made to the satisfaction of the Delegated Authority in the electronic copy intended for deposit with the University Library; or
- c. that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination; or
- d. that the candidate be failed.

53. The Graduate Research Office notifies the College when all examiner's reports have been submitted or otherwise accounted for.

54. After consideration of the examiners' reports, the Delegated Authority recommends to the relevant Associate Dean:

- a. That the candidate be granted the award; or
- b. That the candidate be granted the award subject to making any corrections or revisions in the thesis; or
- c. That the candidate be re-examined by resubmission of thesis or re-examination of coursework or both;
- d. That the candidate be failed.

55. If there is no clear recommendation on the award of the degree arising from the examiner's reports, the Delegated Authority works towards a recommendation drawing on the *Higher Degree by Research: Examiners' Reports Recommendations Guideline*. Potential actions may include but are not limited to:

- a. The appointment of an additional examiner;
- b. The appointment of a Committee comprising the Delegated Authority and two additional staff of the University with relevant expertise, not including the primary supervisor to consider the original reports received;
- c. Consultation with the supervisor who may advise on the reports, however not provide a recommendation on the outcome
- d. Requiring an oral examination

56. Before a Delegated Authority recommends that a candidate be failed where all examiners' reports have not recommended a fail, the divergent reports guideline should be followed.

57. A decision may be based on fewer examiners' reports than initially solicited, but no fewer than two, only if the Delegated Authority has made the decision and GRO have removed the examiner.

58. The Associate Dean approves the recommendation, or an alternative outcome.
59. Examiners do not recommend the award of another degree. On receipt of the outcome of the examination of Revise and Resubmit, or Fail, the candidate may apply to the Delegated Authority for a transfer from the Doctor of Philosophy to the Master of Philosophy. The Associate Dean determines that a candidate be re-examined by resubmission of thesis, or that the candidate not be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.
60. For a thesis by compilation, corrections and revisions normally refer to corrections and revisions to the thesis introduction, conclusion, or linking text, and not to the papers themselves where they have been published, or accepted for publication.
61. For a thesis by compilation, papers published or accepted for publication during the examination process should be included in the final version of the thesis.
62. Revision and resubmission of a thesis may occur once only for the same degree program.
63. Examiners who recommend revision and resubmission of a thesis:
- a. Specify what is required of the candidate before re-examination, on the understanding that anonymous examiners' reports, in full or in part, will be made available to the candidate by the Graduate Research Office ; and
  - b. Indicate, subject to availability, whether or not they are willing to re-examine the thesis.
64. The candidate is given a time limit of one year from the time of notification in which to revise the thesis and submit it for re-examination. A maximum extension of one further year may be granted by the Delegated Authority.
65. When a revised thesis is resubmitted for examination, it should not include a separate written response to the original examiners comments.
66. Access to examiner's reports is restricted to the:
- Associate Dean;
  - Delegated Authority;
  - Head of the relevant academic area;
  - Supervisor(s);
  - Any members of a Committee appointed by the Delegated Authority to consider conflicting examiner's reports;
  - ANU committees considering the award of prizes for excellence in theses, and;
  - Other ANU delegates who require access to the examiner reports for other processes such as academic integrity.

67. Anonymous reports must be made available in full or in part to the candidate after deletion of any section of a report an examiner has specified may not be made available to the candidate or which may identify the examiner.
68. Where a thesis contains confidential material, or a candidate explicitly requests, the Graduate Research Office will take all reasonable steps to ensure that theses are not retained by the examiners and provided back to the candidate, where relevant.

### *Oral Examination*

69. The Delegated Authority may determine that a candidate undertakes an oral examination as part of the thesis examination process in a number of circumstances, including:
- a. Where an examiner recommends revision and resubmission of the thesis or failure, in order to give all parties maximum opportunity to explore the body of work submitted for examination;
  - b. Where the Delegated Authority intends to recommend a result of fail though not all examiners' reports have recommended a fail.
  - c. Where the candidate is undertaking an approved Dual Award program which requires an oral examination; or
  - d. Where a candidate was examined orally before being permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis, if an examiner of the revised thesis requests a further oral examination.
70. The Graduate Research Office arranges oral examinations except for Dual Award PhD degrees where the examination process is set out in the agreement between the ANU and the partner institution.
71. The Graduate Research Office contacts the candidate if an oral examination is required by the Delegated Authority. Examiners provide a copy of the draft reports, and/or specific questions and/or general matters to be addressed by the candidate.
72. The Delegated Authority will decide whether an oral examination is to be held in-person or online. If in-person, it should be held at the ANU campus unless otherwise approved by the Delegated Authority. Arrangements for attendance by examiners are made by the Graduate Research Office.
73. The Associate Dean, or their delegate, will appoint an Oral Examination Chair.
74. An examiner who is unable to be present will be asked to correspond with the Oral Examination Chair indicating any points to be raised. The Chair acts on behalf of the absent examiner and will report the outcome to that examiner and to the Delegated Authority.

75. A candidate brings a copy of the thesis paginated in the same way as the thesis submitted for examination.
76. The oral examination is undertaken on the substance of the candidate's thesis and on the candidate's knowledge of its subject background. The conduct of the oral examination will be determined by the Oral Examination Chair. The only persons present are the candidate, the examiner(s) and the Oral Examination Chair. The candidate may request a support person to attend as an observer only.
77. The Oral Examination Chair may request to the Delegated Authority that a person other than a candidate's supervisors be present to provide further information about the candidate's thesis (e.g. for clarification or contextual material), or, in the case of joint work, the candidate's contribution to the thesis. This request is considered by the Associate Dean.
78. Examiners' recommendations on the outcome of the oral examination are not communicated to the candidate, either during or after the examination. On completion of the examination process, examiners' recommendations and a report on the examination as a whole are submitted in confidence to the Delegated Authority. On receipt of the outcome of the examination process, the candidate is provided with an anonymous report.

#### *Written examination*

79. If an oral examination is required and in the opinion of the Delegated Authority, it is not practicable to hold an oral examination, the candidate takes a written examination, set by the examiners of the thesis, covering the field, which an oral examination would have covered.
80. A written examination will be invigilated.
81. The Graduate Research Office sends the candidate's answers to a written examination to the examiners of the thesis who take them into account in the preparation of their reports.

#### **Thesis Deposit and Open Access**

82. On approval of the thesis, the candidate submits an electronic copy of the thesis to [ANU Digital Thesis Collections](#).
83. The thesis will be openly available in accordance with University policy on open access unless the University Library has been requested to restrict the availability of the thesis in line with any approvals under the *Higher degree by research - use of confidential or restricted information in theses* procedure and the *Intellectual Property Policy*.
84. For deposit of the digital version of the thesis the candidate provides the thesis in a single file, or alternatively:

- a. Any files in the original file format used to create the final version of the thesis (including still images, video, sound etc.).
- b. Separate files for any confidential material or, if the confidential material is throughout the whole thesis, a separate file for the whole thesis.
- c. A pdf of all text portions of the printed thesis (excluding any confidential material).
- d. A list of all files - and software they were created with - that are contained in the package.

85. In the small number of cases where the thesis format will not be able to be presented this way, the candidate should contact the Library for assistance.

86. A department may agree with a candidate to the deposit of a further copy of the thesis in the departmental library.

87. Unless subject to any copyright requirements as part of a thesis by compilation, candidates retain the copyright of their thesis and make such use of it as they wish.

## Document information

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