

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 is read in conjunction with the Research Awards Rules.
2. In cases where a Delegated Authority is also primary supervisor for a student, the Associate Dean appoints an alternate individual to be a Delegated Authority under the Research Awards Rules for the purposes of that student.
3. If at any stage of the submission or examination process an allegation of academic misconduct is raised it is investigated under the Academic Misconduct Rules. Advice is available from policy.regs@anu.edu.au.

Oral presentation

4. An oral presentation is a required milestone which must be completed satisfactorily prior to the submission of a thesis.
5. A candidate gives an oral presentation in the School where the candidate is enrolled between 3 and 6 months prior to the expected submission date.
6. An oral presentation is public unless otherwise approved by the Delegated Authority.
7. An oral presentation is one hour including discussion unless specified otherwise in the Program Requirements.
8. The oral presentation covers the major objectives, content, results and conclusions of the candidate's work.
9. The candidate's supervisory panel assess the presentation against the criteria of:
 - a. Independent command of the material;

- b. Ability to communicate clearly and concisely the analysis of the material and findings; and
- c. Ability to respond appropriately to constructive comment and criticism.

Pre-submission of thesis

Notification of Submission

10. Two months prior to submission, and after consulting their supervisory panel, a student commences the Notification of Intent to Submit (NOI) milestone, containing:
 - a. Student name;
 - b. Student ID;
 - c. Thesis title;
 - d. Date on which the thesis is expected to be submitted; and
 - e. Confirmation from the primary supervisor that the student has consulted with their panel.
11. If the expected submission date changes the student uses the update to the NOI form.

Early Submission

12. A student wishing to submit prior to the minimum duration for the program specified in the Research Awards Rules must obtain the approval of the Delegated Authority for early submission, prior to the submission date.

Supervisor's endorsement

13. 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.
14. The primary supervisor certifies whether to the best of their knowledge the student has complied with the University's rules and regulations relating to candidature for the degree.
15. The supervisor's endorsement confirms that the thesis title and abstract provided by the student are correct.

Submission without supervisor's endorsement

16. Where a primary supervisor does not endorse the submission of a thesis and a student 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.

17. The Delegated Authority will organise for the thesis to be reviewed by a member of academic staff who is not the primary supervisor.

18. On receipt of advice from the member of academic staff, the Delegated Authority will:

- a. Meet with, and provide advice to, the student; and
- b. Provide written advice to the student with the reasons that the thesis is not endorsed.

19. If the student still wishes to submit without the endorsement of their supervisor, the submission and examination process proceeds as per the standard process. 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, after receipt of the examiner's reports.

Format - length

20. 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.

21. 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

22. The first page of the thesis gives its title, the student'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."

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

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

All Rights Reserved

24. The second page contains a statement signed by the student, 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 student's contribution to the research, and a word count or equivalent.

25. Acknowledgments are included in the following pages.

26. Third party editorial advice is provided as per the *Guideline: Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors*.

27. 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.

28. 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.

29. A table of contents appears following the abstract.

30. 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

31. 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 on ISO B4 size (353mm x 250mm) size.

32. 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 fonts are Sans-Serif.
- c. All margins are with header and footing settings as 2.5cm from the top and bottom:

Format	Position	Margin
For all digital theses	All four margins	2.5 cm
Where hard examination copies are requested by examiners – either single-sided or double-sided	Left side	4 cm

printing		
	Top, right, and bottom sides	2cm
Where hard examination copies are requested by examiners - double-sided printing	Odd page, left side	4cm
	Odd page, top, right, and bottom sides	2cm
	Even page, right side	4cm
	Even page, top, left, and bottom sides	2cm

Thesis by compilation

33. The format of a thesis by compilation is as per the *Thesis by Compilation Procedure*.

Thesis in an alternative format

34. 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.

35. Students intending to submit for examination a thesis in an alternative format obtain approval for the format of the thesis from the Delegated Authority, on the advice of the supervisory panel, at the time of the initial or an annual review of progress.

Thesis by creative works

36. The submission of a thesis by creative works is undertaken as per the *Theses by Creative Works guideline*.

Use of confidential material

37. Use of confidential information in a thesis is according to the *Use of Confidential or Restricted Information Theses procedure*.

Submission Process

38. When the thesis is ready for submission, the student notifies the HDR Examinations Office (researchthesis.enq@anu.edu.au).

39. One electronic copy is provided for access by appointed examiners, the Associate Dean, Delegated Authority, head of the relevant academic area, supervisor(s), to ANU committees considering the award of prizes for excellence in theses and, in cases of questions regarding academic integrity, the relevant Authority under the Academic Misconduct Rules.

Thesis examination

Appointment of examiners

40. The Nomination of Examiners form is completed once a student provides a notification of intention to submit but before they submit their thesis.

41. A student is entitled to suggest potential examiners to their supervisor, and to provide the names of a maximum of two persons that they would prefer not to examine the thesis. A student is not entitled to be informed of whether their suggestions have been followed in the appointment of the examiners.

42. Supervisors confirm the expected availability of examiners prior to completing the Nomination of Examiners form.

43. A minimum of two external expert examiners who have international standing are appointed by the Associate Dean on the recommendation of the Delegated Authority.

44. Three or more examiners may be appointed to provide the necessary breadth of expertise for the research topic.

45. 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.

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

47. 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, and:

Examiner's report has not been received for an extended period
The relevant Delegated Authority will be notified after at least 2 months has elapsed since the distribution of the thesis to examiners; and
The Delegated Authority has contacted the relevant examiner to provide them an additional month to provide their report; and
That additional month has passed; and
The examiner has then been contacted by the HDR Examinations office to thank them for their participation however notify them of their withdrawal from the examination process; and
The HDR Examinations Office informs the Delegated Authority of this notification

48. All received examiner's reports are relied upon in determining the award of the degree.

Conflict of interest

49. 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.

50. 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 may also include (but is not limited to):
- a. The student;
 - b. The supervisory panel including primary supervisor and chair of panel; and/or
 - c. The examiner.
51. The investigation is discussed with an examiner only where directly relevant to the examiner or the examination process.
52. 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.
53. If it is unclear whether a conflict of interest exists, the relevant examiner is to be excluded from the examination process
54. The rationale for any determination is recorded on the student file.

Examination process

55. 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.
56. Once a student has submitted their thesis for examination:
- a. Except in the course of an oral examination, an examiner does not knowingly communicate about the research under examination directly with the student;
 - b. Except in the course of an oral examination, a student does not knowingly communicate directly with an examiner about the research under examination;
 - c. Supervisors and examiners must not knowingly communicate about the research under examination with each other;
 - d. Examiners do not knowingly disclose the content of a thesis to an external party until a thesis has been approved for award.
57. Communications are subject to any approvals under the *Use of Confidential or Restricted Information Theses procedure*.
58. The Associate Dean may, at the request of an examiner, nominate a person other than the student's primary supervisor to provide further information about the thesis or, in the case of joint work, the student's contribution to the thesis.

59. Where an appropriate report and completed *Examiner Payment Request* form is received, payment is made to the examiner.
60. Examiners make one of the following four recommendations after completing the examination of the thesis:
- a. that the student be granted the award; or
 - b. that the student 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 student be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination; or
 - d. that the student be failed.
61. The HDR Examinations Office notifies the Delegated Authority when all examiner's reports have been submitted or otherwise accounted for.
62. After consideration of the examiners' reports, the Delegated Authority recommends to the relevant Associate Dean:
- a. That the student be granted the award; or
 - b. That the student be granted the award subject to making any corrections or revisions in the thesis; or
 - c. That the student be re-examined by resubmission of thesis or re-examination of coursework or both;
 - d. That the student be failed.
63. The Associate Dean approves the recommendation, or an alternative outcome.
64. 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
65. If the Delegated Authority intends to recommend that a student be failed where all examiners' reports have not recommended a fail, the student be given the opportunity to

nominate if they would like a further examination. If the student indicates they would, the Delegated Authority may determine whether this is through either an additional examiner of the thesis, or an oral examination, or a written examination.

66. A decision may be based on fewer examiners' reports than initially solicited, but no fewer than two, only if:

- a. The Delegated Authority is notified after at least 2 months has elapsed since distribution of the thesis to examiners that a report has not been received and;
- b. The Delegated Authority has contacted the relevant examiner to provide them an additional month to provide their report and;
- c. That additional month has passed and;
- d. The examiner has been contacted by the HDR Examinations Office a second time to notify them of their withdrawal from the examination process and;
- e. The HDR Examinations Office informs the College of this notification; and
- f. The reports received are from external expert examiners and consistent.

67. Examiners do not recommend the award of another degree, however the student may apply to the Delegated Authority for a transfer from the Doctor of Philosophy to the Master of Philosophy if, following submission of the examiner's reports the Associate Dean determines that a student be re-examined by resubmission of thesis, or that the student not be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

68. 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 submitted for publication.

69. Revision and resubmission of a thesis may occur once only.

70. Examiners who recommend revision and resubmission of a thesis:

- a. Specify what is required of the student before re-examination, on the understanding that anonymous examiners' reports, in full or in part, will be made available to the student by the HDR Examinations Office; and
- b. Indicate their willingness to re-examine the thesis subject to availability.

71. The student 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.

72. 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, and to ANU committees considering the award of prizes for excellence in theses.

73. Anonymous reports may be made available in full or in part to the student after deletion of any section of a report an examiner has specified may not be made available to the student or which may identify the examiner.

74. Where a thesis contains confidential material, or a student explicitly requests, the HDR Examinations Office will take all reasonable steps to ensure that theses are returned from examiners and provided back to the student.

Oral examination

75. The Delegated Authority may determine that a student undertakes an oral examination as part of the thesis examination process in a number of circumstances, including:

- a. Where an examiner provisionally 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 student is undertaking an approved Dual Award program which requires an oral examination; or
- d. Where a student was examined orally before being permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis, if an examiner of the revised thesis requests a further oral examination.

76. An oral examination takes the form of a defence of the thesis.

77. The HDR Examinations 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.

78. The HDR Examinations Office contacts the student 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 student.

79. An oral examination will be held at the ANU campus unless otherwise approved by the Delegated Authority. An oral examination may be held elsewhere in Australia or overseas if it is expected that the student will be able to attend at the appropriate time.

Arrangements for attendance by examiners at an oral examination held at the ANU Campus or at another location are made by the HDR Examinations Office.

80. With the agreement of the student, the examiners and any assessor, an oral examination may be held in telephone conference or video conference format.

81. One of the examiners will be asked to act as Chair of Examiners.

82. An examiner who is unable to be present will be asked to correspond with the Chair of Examiners indicating any points to be raised. The Chair will act on behalf of the absent examiner and will report the outcome to that examiner and to the Registrar.

83. Where less than two examiners are able to be present at an oral examination the University will appoint an assessor as observer. The sole function of the assessor is to ensure that the oral examination is properly and fairly conducted. The assessor does not act as an examiner, however the assessor is not required to remain silent throughout the oral examination.

84. A student brings a copy of the thesis paginated in the same way as the thesis submitted for examination.

85. The oral examination is undertaken on the substance of the student's thesis and on the student's knowledge of its subject background. The conduct of the oral examination will be at the discretion of the examiner(s) present. No persons apart from an assessor may attend unless approved by the Delegated Authority.

86. An examiner may request to the Registrar that a person other than a student's supervisors be present to provide further information about the student's thesis (e.g. for clarification or contextual material), or, in the case of joint work, the student's contribution to the thesis. This request is considered by the Associate Dean.

87. Examiners' recommendations on the outcome of the oral examination are not communicated to the student, 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 Registrar who will forward them for the consideration of the Delegated Authority. On complete of the examination process, the student is provided with an anonymous report.

Written examination

88. If an oral examination is required and in the opinion of the Delegated Authority it is not practicable to hold an oral examination, the student takes a written examination, set by the examiners of the thesis, covering the field which an oral examination would have covered.

89. A written examination will be invigilated.

90. The Registrar sends the student'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

91. On approval of the thesis the student submits an electronic copy of the thesis to [ANU Digital Thesis Collections](#)

92. 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 *Use of Confidential Information in Higher Degree by Research Procedures*.
93. For deposit of the digital version of the thesis the student 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.
94. In the small number of cases where the thesis format will not be able to be presented this way, the student contacts the Library for assistance.
95. A department may agree with a candidate to the deposit of a further copy of the thesis in the departmental library.
96. Unless subject to any copyright requirements as part of a thesis by compilation, students retain the copyright of their thesis and may make such use of it as they wish.

Document information

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