

Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy establishes the requirements for the preparation, submission and examination of higher degree research (HDR) theses at Macquarie University.

Background

(2) This Policy covers the thesis component of the following degrees:

- a. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and all other doctorates by research;
- b. Master of Philosophy (MPhil); and
- c. Master of Research (MRes).

(3) Research Doctorates enable candidates to undertake extensive, independent research which forms a distinct contribution to the knowledge of a chosen subject, and which affords evidence of coherence and originality shown either by the discovery of new facts or by the exercise of independent critical power.

(4) The Master of Philosophy is awarded for research that demonstrates that a contribution has been made to knowledge in a particular field of study by presenting new facts or by demonstrating an independent critical ability to evaluate existing material in a new light.

(5) The Master of Research is partly awarded for a research project that critically responds to or reflects on current research in the relevant field by producing clearly justified empirical outcomes or analytical evaluations.

(6) Macquarie University requires HDR candidates to prepare a thesis in fulfillment of higher degree by research requirements and for the thesis to undergo a process of external examination. Reports of the examination process are submitted in writing and reviewed by the Research Degree Subcommittee (RDSC) of the Research and Research Training Committee (RRTC).

(7) When all work on the thesis has been satisfactorily completed (including any compulsory coursework units) and all thesis preparation, submission and examination requirements have been met to the satisfaction of RDSC, a recommendation is made to RRTC as to the award of the relevant degree.

Scope

(8) This Policy applies to all:

- a. higher degree research candidates enrolled at Macquarie University;
- b. supervisors as defined in the [Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy](#);
- c. other Macquarie University academic and professional staff acting on behalf of these HDR candidates; and
- d. examiners of Macquarie University HDR theses.

Section 2 - Policy

Thesis Preparation

(9) As an HDR thesis embodies the results of research and investigation by a candidate enrolled in a higher degree by research, Macquarie University requires that:

- a. a research degree make a contribution to knowledge and in the case of doctoral degrees, this contribution must be 'distinct';
- b. at least half of the work done towards the thesis must be undertaken while formally enrolled as an HDR candidate at Macquarie University; and
- c. unless agreed under a formal Joint or Cotutelle enrolment contract, a candidate may not submit as the main content of the thesis any work or material which has been previously submitted for any degree successfully completed at Macquarie University or elsewhere, but may incorporate that work or material in the thesis, if the candidate specifies the work or material which has been so incorporated.
- d. the length of the thesis conforms to discipline standards. Typically, the thesis should be between 75,000 and a maximum of 100,000 words in length for a doctoral thesis, a maximum of 50,000 words for an MPhil thesis, and a maximum of 20,000 words for an MRes thesis.

(10) The University recognises that theses or parts of theses may be presented in a variety of formats and media. In such cases, theses must incorporate a written component situated in an academic discourse appropriate to the discipline area. In the case of theses that include creative work, at least half of the thesis must take the form of an academic dissertation.

(11) Theses may include relevant papers (including conference presentations) published, accepted, submitted or prepared for publication. These papers must:

- a. form a coherent and integrated body of work;
- b. include a comprehensive and critical introduction and an integrative conclusion; and
- c. focus on a single project or set of related questions or propositions.

(12) In addition to the above requirements, the thesis must:

- a. be the candidate's own work and any contribution by other people, including co-authors of papers, must be clearly stated in the thesis;
- b. be prepared and presented in conformity with all the requirements of the Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research; and
- c. be written in English and reach a satisfactory level of literary presentation.

(13) Any requests from HDR candidates to submit a thesis or part thereof in a language other than English will require the approval of RDSC as early in candidature as possible.

(14) If the thesis does not meet these requirements, RDSC may decide not to submit it for examination.

Thesis by Publication

(15) Where appropriate, Macquarie University encourages candidates to prepare a thesis by publication as this format provides an opportunity to add further value to the research student experience. A thesis by publication also provides an incentive for timely completion, enhances employment prospects, and improves publication outputs.

(16) The requirements for a thesis by publication are further set out in Schedule 1 - HDR Thesis by Publication.

Creative Thesis

(17) The University accepts theses for the PhD, MPhil and MRes degrees in the form of combined dissertation and creative work. The creative component of the thesis can be in a variety of forms including but not limited to music, writing, film, performance, drama, and multi-media.

(18) The requirements for creative theses are further set out in Schedule 5 - Creative Theses.

Thesis Submission

(19) The Principal Supervisor must certify in writing that the thesis meets all of Macquarie University's preparation requirements before the thesis can be recommended for examination.

(20) If the Principal Supervisor declines to certify in writing that the thesis meets all the preparation requirements, a candidate may submit a thesis for examination against the advice of the Principal Supervisor, to RDSC. RDSC will receive and review the submission and make an appropriate recommendation to RRTC for decision.

Appointment of Examiners

(21) The appointment of examiners and the criteria for appointment of examiners of HDR Theses are set out in Schedule 2 - HDR Appointment of Examiners .

Thesis Examination

(22) Examiners are required to report in writing to RDSC in an approved format indicating their assessment of the thesis.

(23) The criteria for HDR examination are set out in Schedule 3 - HDR Thesis Examination Criteria.

(24) Thesis content will remain confidential during the examination period and Macquarie University reserves the right to request examiners to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement if required.

(25) In the case of Doctoral degrees or the Master of Philosophy, examiners may recommend to RDSC that a candidate undertake such oral, written or practical examination as they may specify. RDSC may determine that such an examination be used to resolve concerns about the thesis. The candidate is required to attend any such examination.

Thesis Re-examination

(26) The requirements that must be met for an HDR Thesis re-examination are set out in Schedule 4 - HDR Thesis Re-Examination.

Degree Award Recommendations

(27) RDSC will determine the examination result to be recommended to RRTC. RDSC will:

- a. review individual examination reports and the comments submitted about the examination reports by the Principal Supervisor; and
- b. consider the reports of all examiners in light of the criteria for the award of the degree.

(28) After considering all reports RDSC may:

- a. recommend to RRTC the award of the degree;
- b. require that corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of RDSC be carried out by the candidate before the award of the degree;

- c. require that the candidate undertakes further study and research, and resubmits the thesis for re-examination by one (1) or more examiners as determined by RDSC;
- d. in the event of substantial disagreement amongst examiners, appoint a further examiner, moderator or adjudicator or request that an oral examination be held;
- e. determine that an oral, written or practical examination be used to resolve concerns about the thesis;
- f. recommend that the degree be not awarded; or
- g. take such action as it deems appropriate before making a recommendation to RRTC on the examination outcome.

(29) RDSC will make a recommendation to RRTC for the award of a Vice-Chancellor's Commendation for PhD and MPhil theses which are typically nominated by all examiners as being in the top 5 percent (or equivalent) of research at the level of the degree.

(30) Faculty Associate Deans will advise RDSC of the recipients of the award of the Executive Dean's Commendation for Academic Excellence in Year 2 Master of Research. This commendation is awarded to candidates who have demonstrated exceptional performance in Year 2 of the Master of Research, as evidenced by the final WAM and the examination reports. Refer to the [Nomination for Executive Dean's Commendation for Academic Excellence in Year 2 MRes](#) template.

Appeals

(31) Candidates may appeal decisions relating to the award of PhD, MPhil or MRes degree in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Policy](#). Appeals on this basis are limited to procedural grounds only. Students have 20 working days to submit an appeal following notification of the decision.

Thesis Finalisation

(32) A copy of a candidate's thesis approved by RDSC must be lodged with the Macquarie University Library.

Unforeseen Events

(33) Any dispute or unforeseen event in relation to the preparation, submission or examination of a candidate's thesis must be referred to RDSC for consideration. RDSC will make appropriate recommendations to RRTC for determination.

(34) Unforeseen events include, but are not limited to:

- a. failure or inability of candidate to complete thesis preparation, submission or examination requirements due to illness, incapacity, death or misconduct;
- b. the Principal Supervisor declining to certify that the candidate's thesis meets Macquarie University's preparation requirements in accordance with this Policy and associated Procedures, and the candidate submitting the thesis for examination against the decision of the Principal Supervisor; or
- c. failure by, or inability of, an examiner commencing or completing examination of a candidate's thesis due to illness, incapacity, conflict of interest, unwillingness, or death.

Section 3 - Procedures

(35) Refer to the [Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure](#) and the [Master of Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure](#).

Section 4 - Guidelines

(36) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(37) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Academic Senate means the Academic Senate of Macquarie University
- b. RDSC means Research Degree Subcommittee
- c. RRTC means Research and Research Training Committee
- d. Procedure means the [Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure](#).

Status and Details

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