Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy specifies the principles for the preparation, submission and examination of Graduate Research (GR) theses at Macquarie University.

(2) This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure, Schedule 1 - Graduate Research Appointment of Examiners and Schedule 2 - Graduate Research Thesis Examination Criteria.

Background

(3) This Policy covers the preparation, submission and examination requirements for the thesis component of the following degrees:

a. Master of Research;
b. Master of Public Health (Research);
c. Master of Philosophy;
d. Doctor of Philosophy;
e. Cotutelle and Joint PhD with an approved partner University;
f. Combined Master of Clinical Psychology and Doctor of Philosophy;
g. Combined Master of Clinical Neuropsychology and Doctor of Philosophy; and
h. Combined Master of Organisational Psychology and Doctor of Philosophy.

(4) The Doctor of Philosophy is awarded for extensive independent research that forms a distinct contribution to knowledge and demonstrates originality either by the discovery of new facts or by the exercise of independent critical or creative power.

(5) 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.

(6) The Master of Research is awarded for the completion of advanced disciplinary units, and a major research project that critically responds to or reflects on current research in the relevant field by producing clearly justified empirical outcomes or analytical evaluations.

(7) Macquarie University requires GR students to prepare a thesis in fulfillment of Graduate Research degree 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 Academic Senate Research Committee (ASRC).

(8) 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 ASRC as to the award of the relevant degree.

Scope

(9) This Policy applies to all:

a. GR students enrolled at Macquarie University;
b. supervisors as defined in the Graduate Research Supervision Policy;
c. other Macquarie University academic and professional staff acting on behalf of these GR students; and
d. examiners of Macquarie University GR theses.

Section 2 - Policy

Part A - General Thesis Examination Principles

(10) This policy is aligned with the standards set by the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

(11) All examination tasks must comply with the requirements specified in this policy and the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure.

Part B - Thesis Preparation

(12) As the GR thesis embodies the results of research and investigation by a student enrolled in a Graduate Research degree, Macquarie University requires that:

a. a research degree makes a contribution to knowledge and in the case of doctoral degrees, this contribution must be 'distinct';
b. at least half of the student's work must have been completed whilst an enrolled student in a graduate research degree at Macquarie University;
c. unless agreed under a formal Joint or Cotutelle enrolment contract, a student 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 student specifies the work or material which has been so incorporated; and
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 (PhD) thesis, a maximum of 50,000 words for an MPhil thesis, and a maximum of 20,000 words for an MRes thesis.

(13) Students may retain the services of an editor following approval from their supervisor. The editing process for research students is governed by the 'Guidelines for Editing Research Theses' as set out by the Institute of Professional Editors Limited (IPEd).

(14) All work to be submitted for examination must be undertaken in accordance with all of the requirements of the Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Associated Information.

(15) The use of generative artificial intelligence to wholly generate a research output for examination is prohibited.

Part C - Thesis Formats

(16) 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.

(17) Theses may include relevant papers (including conference presentations) published, accepted, submitted or prepared for publication. The requirements for a thesis by publication are further set out under clauses 22-24.

(18) Theses may include a creative component. In such cases, at least half of the thesis must take the form of an academic dissertation. The requirements for a thesis with a creative component are further set out under clauses 25-30.

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

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

(20) Any requests from students 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.

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

Thesis by Publication

(22) A thesis by publication may include relevant papers, including conference presentations, which have been published, accepted, submitted or prepared for publication and meets the minimum requirement that at least half of the student's work has been completed whilst an enrolled student in a research degree at Macquarie University.

(23) The papers must form a coherent and integrated body of work, which focusses on a single thesis project or set of related questions or propositions. These papers are one part of the thesis, rather than a separate component (or appendix). The thesis must include a critical introduction to the work, sections that link the papers together, and a concluding section that synthesises the material as a whole. In examining a thesis by publication, examiners may apply the same criteria in terms of unity of purpose and coherence of argument as for traditional theses.

(24) The contribution of others to each of the proposed or published research papers should be specified in an Authorship Contribution Statement Form in accordance with the Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the Research Authorship Policy. Where a paper has multiple authors, the student should usually be the principal author and evidence of this must appear in the appropriate manner for the discipline.

Creative Thesis

(25) 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.

(26) For the purpose of examination, the dissertation component must be at least 50% of the typical length of the thesis.

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(27) The creative component of the thesis must demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the chosen genre, and show that informed choices have been made in the design and execution of the work. The creative component in music could be: a written score; a compositional folio containing a number of pieces which might be in different forms; software; video or audio recording(s). Indigenous students may include creative components that reflect their cultural standpoints.

(28) The dissertation component may take a variety of forms. It may comprise a theoretical explanation of the subject-matter of the thesis, it may address the genre of the creative work or its historical, social or cultural context, or a combination of these.

(29) The research component and the creative project are conceived as complementary elements of a coherent research project. The research component should engage in a scholarly way with critical issues that inform the creative work.

(30) No creative components which have been published or submitted for publication prior to candidature may be submitted as part of the project.

Part D - Thesis Submission

(31) 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.

(32) If the Principal Supervisor declines to certify in writing that the thesis meets all the preparation requirements, a student may submit a thesis for examination against the advice of the Principal Supervisor as outlined in clause 11 of the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure.

(33) Students may request an embargo on access to their thesis on the basis of cultural, ethical, legal or commercial reasons ("RDSC Embargo"). RDSC may, at its discretion, approve a thesis embargo on application from the student and recommendation from the Faculty AD RTP. Requests of up to twelve (12) months per application will be considered, with longer durations considered exceptionally. Students must submit a new request for an additional period of time. If approved, the thesis will not be available for publication in the University online thesis repository for the specified period.

(34) A thesis, work or appendix will normally only be restricted if:

a. it contains confidential or sensitive material;
b. it was a condition imposed by the owner of private records and material used by the student;
c. the student was in an employment or other contract relationship with a third party that made the restriction a condition of the contract; and/or
d. the student is applying for a patent, or there is another Intellectual Property (IP) or commercial reason.

(35) Students seeking to publish their thesis, or parts thereof, may request a temporary embargo from the Macquarie University Library during the submission and editorial review process ("Library Embargo").

Part E - Appointment of Examiners

(36) The appointment of examiners and the criteria for appointment of examiners of GR theses are set out in Schedule 1 - Graduate Research Appointment of Examiners.

Thesis Examination

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

thesis.

(38) The criteria for GR examination are set out in Schedule 2 - Graduate Research Thesis Examination Criteria.

(39) Thesis content will remain confidential during the examination period and Macquarie University reserves the right to request examiners to sign a Confidentiality Deed Poll if required.

(40) In the case of Doctoral (PhD) degrees or the Master of Philosophy (MPhil), RDSC may recommend that a student undertake an 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 student is required to attend any such examination.

Part F - Thesis Re-examination

(41) The requirements that must be met for a GR Thesis re-examination are set out in the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure.

(42) Only one re-examination of a GR thesis is permitted.

Part G - Degree Award Recommendations

(43) RDSC will determine the examination result to be recommended to ASRC. RDSC will:

a. review individual examination reports and the comments submitted about the examination reports by the Principal Supervisor, HoD/S's (or nominee) or AD-RTP (as outlined in the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure); and
b. consider the reports of all examiners in light of the criteria for the award of the degree.

(44) After considering all reports RDSC may recommend an appropriate outcome as set out in the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure.

(45) RDSC will make a recommendation to ASRC 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.

(46) The Faculty AD-RTP 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 students who have demonstrated exceptional performance in Year 2 of the Master of Research, as evidenced by the final SNG of 92 (and above) and the examination reports.

Part H - Thesis Finalisation

(47) A digital copy of a student's thesis approved by RDSC must be lodged with the Macquarie University Library via the applicable online form in use at the time for deposit into the Macquarie University Theses Collection. Theses will by default be made Open Access. Exceptions are only made in the following circumstances:

a. A thesis with a RDSC Embargo will not be lodged with the Macquarie University Library until conclusion of the RDSC Embargo period.
b. A thesis with a Library Embargo will be lodged and deposited as above, but only the thesis title and metadata will be displayed in Open Access. The full version of the final thesis will not be available publicly until the conclusion of the Library Embargo period.

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Part I - Unforeseen Events

Aegrotat and Posthumous Examination

(48) The examination, award and conferral of aegrotat and posthumous awards will be managed in accordance with the Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards Policy.

Part J - Appeals

(49) Students may appeal decisions relating to the award of PhD, MPhil or MRes degree in accordance with the 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.

Section 3 - Procedures

(50) Refer to the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(51) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

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

a. RDSC means Research Degree Subcommittee.
b. ASRC means Academic Senate Research Committee.
c. Procedure means the Graduate Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Procedure.

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