Edith Cowan University
Graduate Research
GUIDELINES

ECU
EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

Guideline Title: Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Thesis Preparation

Guideline Owner: Dean, Graduate Research

This guideline supports the University to operationalise the *Research Training Policy* and must be complied with.

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1.   INTENT

This guideline is to assist Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Candidates and Supervisors in the formatting of a thesis or exegesis. These Guidelines should be read along with the Research Training Policy and supporting procedure documents, particularly Guideline: HDR Thesis Examination.

2.   ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

This guideline applies to all Staff, Candidates and Supervisors involved in any aspect of Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) including adjunct positions and emeritus professors that administer, supervise, or otherwise contribute to HDR Candidates and HDR Courses.

3.   DEFINITIONS

The University Glossary and definitions in the Research Training Policy apply to this guideline.

4.   GUIDELINE CONTENT

Thesis Requirements

4.1.   All Candidates must prepare a thesis as outlined in Guideline: HDR Thesis Examination. The thesis must be based upon research conducted during the period of enrolment and can be submitted as either a:

   a.   Standard Thesis;

b.   Thesis with publication; or

a.   Thesis by creative works and accompanying exegesis.

4.2.   The most appropriate thesis format will vary according to the research project, methodology, and discipline. Candidates are strongly encouraged to research, review, and discuss the format of other relevant theses when planning their work. Candidates and Supervisors must discuss, and agree to, the thesis format at each milestone. A standard or traditional thesis format typically involves the presentation of the thesis in a series of chapters. This may include chapters for an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion.

4.3.   Candidates will often create publications and non-traditional research outputs throughout their degree. These outputs may be included within the thesis as a 'thesis with publication'. The University defines a Thesis with Publication as:

'A Masters by Research or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree that includes the publishing of research throughout the degree, and the inclusion of one or more research outputs within the final thesis.'

General Requirements

4.4.   The thesis should contain:

a.   **Title Page**: Providing the full title of the thesis, the Candidate's name (as recorded on the student record), ORCID iD, the title of degree, enrolling School, and the date of submission for examination.

b.   **Declaration Page**: Immediately following the Title Page. The declaration page will be signed and dated by the Candidate at submission (and upon re-submission if required). The declaration page must pertain to the entire thesis and outline the following:
I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that this thesis:
- does not contain any material previously submitted for an award in any institution of higher education without acknowledgment;
- does not contain any material previously published or produced by generative artificial intelligence or another person without appropriate acknowledgement;
- does not contain any defamatory material; and
- meets the academic integrity, research governance and ethical standards required of the University.

c.   **Table of Contents**: Followed where applicable, by a table of tables and a table of figures.

d.   **Abstract**: Should be between 200 to 500 words, that provides a clear and accurate account of the main arguments, methodology, scope, and findings.

e.   **Acknowledgements**: Appropriate acknowledgment by the Candidate of co-authored work, help received, or work carried out by any other person or organisation, for example: editing services, a research assistant, web designer or

technical support. Full acknowledgement of the role of any person or people who provided support needs to be attributed in the thesis.

f. **Acknowledgement of Country**: Candidates may wish to include an acknowledgement of country in the thesis or exegesis. Should Candidates wish to include an acknowledgement of country it may be inserted as a separate page after the declaration page.

g. **Funding Acknowledgment**: Candidates should include a statement acknowledging any research grant funding that has supported the research contained within the thesis. Candidates should discuss such acknowledgements with their Supervisors. Recipients of the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) support (fees, offsets, stipends, or allowances) are required to acknowledge this contribution in the research thesis and any research publications, arising from the research undertaken during the Candidature, for example, with the following statement: *This research is/was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship*.

h. **Copyright Statement**: If a thesis includes third party material including any published research outputs in the main body or as an appendix, a statement must be included to indicate permission regarding copyright has been obtained from publishers, where necessary. In determining such requirements Candidates may wisht to consider fair dealing exemptions in the use of copyright material for particular works. The statement may include:

I have obtained, where necessary, permission from the copyright owners to use any third-party copyright material reproduced in the thesis (e.g., questionnaires, artwork, diagram, unpublished letters), or to use any of my own published work (e.g., journal articles) in which the copyright is held by another party (e.g., publisher, co-author).

Copies of the permission statements should be included in an appendix to the thesis.

i. **Confidentiality Statement:** If a thesis contains confidential information belonging to a third party, the thesis must incorporate a statement signed by the Candidate setting out the terms or conditions on which access was granted by the party or entity owning the confidential information and any stipulations regarding subsequent disclosure of the information.

Formatting Requirements

4.5. The word length of a thesis will vary according to discipline but must be of sufficient scope for the level of degree. As a guide, the maximum number of words in the text, excluding references and appendices, should be:

a. Masters by Research thesis, 60,000 words
b. Masters by Research exegesis, 30,000 words
c. Doctor of Philosophy, 100,000 words
d. Doctor of Philosophy exegesis, 50,000 words

4.6.   The text component of a thesis must be presented in a clear, legible typeface of at least 11 point, normally in 1.5 line spacing.

4.7.   Pages should be numbered consecutively and displayed in the top or bottom margin, flush with the outside margin, or centred. If presented in hard copy, the thesis should be printed double-sided with mirrored margins of at least 4 centimetres on the left-hand side and 2 centimetres on the right-hand side with sufficient space at the top and bottom to allow for trimming during binding.

4.8.   The title for a figure, diagram, or photograph should be placed below the information or diagram. Full-page figures should form a right-hand page with the legend either at the bottom or, if necessary, on the page facing the figures. Wherever possible, tables should be inserted in the appropriate place in the text, but lengthy or bulky tables may appear as appendices. The title for a table should be placed above the table.

4.9.   Candidates are required to appropriately reference and acknowledge any sources that have been used to develop the thesis. The most appropriate referencing style used should be discussed with the Supervisors.

Acknowledging the Contribution of Others

4.10.   It is a responsibility of researchers within the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research to acknowledge those that have contributed to the research. The acknowledgment of others within research conducted in a thesis or exegesis may take several forms including, but not limited to, acknowledgement within subheadings outlined above, appropriate referencing or attribution towards research outputs/chapters.

4.11.   Appropriate acknowledgement of others may also include the use of professional editors, particular software or code, and use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in any aspect of the research. It is important to note that the communication of research and writing are important requirements of HDR courses. As such, Candidates should be aware that their own contribution to the thesis or exegesis will be assessed and therefore must ensure that any support provided by others is in addition to their own contribution.

4.12.   Candidates are required to effectively communicate their research and to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the specific topic area. Candidates are responsible to ensure appropriate accuracy, confidentiality and integrity of information provided within their research and thesis. Data management and confidentiality requirements must be carefully considered in the use of Artificial Intelligence technologies. Materials developed with the use of generative Artificial Intelligence tools within a Higher Degree by Research course must:

   a.   adhere to all principles of research integrity as outlined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, including confidentiality, acknowledgment, honesty and transparency.
   b.   align with ECUs policies and supporting procedures, including but not limited to Conducting Research with Integrity Policy, Data Management Policy, Academic Integrity Policy.

Edith Cowan University
Graduate Research

GUIDELINES

ECU
EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

c.   be appropriately acknowledged within the research output or other works created.

4.13.   Candidates and Supervisors are encouraged to view the relevant guidelines provided on Canvas and by the Institute of Professional Editors Limited. Further details on research publications are outlined below. Authors on research outputs are those, and only those that have made a significant intellectual or scholarship contribution to the research and its output, and agree to be listed as a co-author. As such, a HDR Supervisor may or may not be included as an author on research outputs produced throughout a Candidate's journey. Further details are provided in the Conducting Research with Integrity Policy and supporting guidelines.

Additional Requirements for a Thesis with Publication

4.14.   A thesis with publication enables Higher Degrees by Research to be awarded to Candidates based on their original and substantial scholarly contribution to knowledge, as demonstrated in a range of publications. A thesis with publication is a combination of publishable work based on original research, and a substantive written, integrating component. The research process and material presented must be equivalent to a traditional thesis; the main difference is in the format of the final submission. When submitting a thesis with publications Candidates should clearly articulate any work within the thesis or exegesis that is published or in-press. If the Candidate wishes to include publications relevant to the thesis that do not appear as full text chapters, these may be included as appendices. Candidates and Supervisors are strongly recommended to review the University's Authorship and Publication Guidelines if submitting a thesis with publication. Additionally, there are several important considerations and benefits of submitting a thesis with publication on the Research Journey webpage.

4.15.   A publication refers to the presentation of research outcomes that will be available in the public domain. This can include research presented in the format of a journal article, book chapter, published conference paper, or any other form of scholarly work prepared for publication. The publications prepared should be submitted for academic peer review, similar to that of refereed journals, or to be at an equivalent standard as certified by the Supervisor. Examples of other acceptable forms of publication, based on adhering to the standards above, include monographs, media recordings, performances, exhibitions, curated exhibition/s, creative work, software, or other original work relevant to the discipline and approved by the Supervisor.

4.16.   The submitted thesis or exegesis can consist of publications that have already been published, are in the process of being published, or a combination of these. For example, this could include publications that are accepted, are still under review, have recently been submitted, or will soon be submitted. All research presented in the thesis must have been completed during the period of enrolment. The number of publications submitted will vary between disciplines and projects but should be sufficient for the body of work to constitute a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

4.17.   Where possible, an electronic copy of the final thesis should be lodged with the ECU Research Online institutional repository. Some of the thesis may contain copyright material that is owned by publishers. The Candidate may only submit all parts of the thesis for which either

they hold the copyright (for example, the main body of the thesis), they have appropriate copyright exceptions or for which the copyright holders have provided clearance for submission to the repository (for example, from a journal paper publisher).

4.18.   Candidates submitting a thesis with publication must include a statement attributing appropriate contributions to any aspects of every research output included. An attribution statement may be written in text or presented as an attribution table outlining the domains of attribution and percent contribution of all authors (see examples below in section 4.20). The attribution must either be signed by co-authors or supported by a declaration statement from the Candidate outlining it to be a true representation of the contribution. The domains of attribution may vary according to discipline but must always meet the criteria for authorship.

4.19.   Where the Candidate is a joint author they should be first author with a contribution of at least 50% to each publication. For large collaborative projects (e.g., productions, design plans, or exhibitions with multiple artists), the Candidate must have contributed at least 50% to the component of the publication for which their thesis is based on.

4.20.   Candidates should follow the general thesis format requirements detailed above. In addition, Candidates are required to insert the following after acknowledgements:

a.   **List of Publications**: for work that has been published or 'in press' at the time of submission. Candidates should list the full bibliographic citations in the order they appear in the thesis. A statement that permission regarding copyright has been obtained from the publishers should be provided, where necessary.

b.   **Statement of attribution or contribution**: summarising and clearly identifying the nature and extent of the intellectual input by the Candidate and any co-authors. The statement must be signed by the Candidate and the Supervisor.

c.   **Publication/Thesis Chapters**: formatted the same and embedded as chapters within the thesis. The full bibliographic citation of the publication should be stated on the first page, with a Summary Statement (see 4.14 Additional Format Requirements for Thesis by Publication) if required.

d.   **Appendices**: may include statements from co-authors, permission letters regarding copyright and evidence demonstrating some form of peer review of the publications. If detailed descriptions of methods and additional data are not provided within the publications, they should be included as an appendix to the thesis.

4.21.   If an adequate contextual literature review is not otherwise presented as part of the publications, it should be included in the critical review or as a separate literature review chapter. If detailed data and descriptions of methods are not otherwise given, they will be included as part of a separate methodology chapter or in appendices. The thesis must be coherent and not appear disjointed. To achieve this, other supporting commentary may be needed, such as a Foreword or Summary Statement at the beginning of each chapter/publication to establish the link to previous chapters and explain how it relates to the overall thesis argument. The chapters could also contain internal references to each other to avoid repetition. Publications should be presented in a sequential order that is logical to the progression of the thesis argument, and not necessarily in the order in which the work was

undertaken or published. The thesis chapter in some cases could be an expanded version of the publication.

Examples of Attribution Statements

- When provided as an attribution table

	Conception and design	Acquisition of research data	Contribution of knowledge	Data processing or interrogation	Analysis and interpretation of research data	Drafting or revising the research output
Author 1 (Name)						
I acknowledge that this above represents my contribution to the research output (signed)						
Author 2 (Name)						
I acknowledge that this above represents my contribution to the research output (signed)						

- When provided written into text

To Whom It May Concern,

I, [Full Name of Candidate], contributed (insert details of the Candidate's contributions to each component of the research reported in the publication) to the paper/publication entitled (insert reference details).

(Signature of Candidate)

I, as a Co-Author, endorse that this level of contribution by the Candidate indicated above is appropriate.

(Full Name of Co-Author 1) (Signature of Co-Author 1) (Affiliation) (Date)
(Full Name of Co-Author 2) (Signature of Co-Author 2) (Affiliation) (Date)
(Full Name of Co-Author 3) (Signature of Co-Author 3) (Affiliation) (Date)

Additional Requirements for a Thesis by Creative Research and accompanied Exegesis

4.22. The Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Arts in various modes of creative research is an independent study based upon the perspective that creative art practices are alternative forms of knowledge embedded in investigation processes and methodologies of the various disciplines of performance (theatre, dance and/or music), the visual and audio arts, design and creative writing. It consists of a major creative project and a related exegesis (or discursive text). To be awarded the degree, the Candidate will demonstrate in the practice of the discipline or disciplines, and through the interrelated exegesis, that the work is a substantial and original contribution to the knowledge/s of the discipline/s.

4.23. The thesis will normally consist of the following:

A creative project or series of related projects in the practice of the chosen discipline or disciplines that demonstrates through practice:

a.   a substantial and thorough conceptual understanding of the discipline/s;

b.   the Candidate's overall knowledge of, and original, creative and innovative contribution within, the discipline/s; and

c.   appropriate technical excellence in the relevant skill area outlined in the Candidate's thesis. The clarity of the Candidate's major concern is crucial for the examination process since measurement of levels of technical excellence varies depending on whether the research is couched in a specific genre of practice, experimental treatment across media of a particular theme, or in alternative methods where the focus is on process rather than on product (although the two may be intertwined)

A written exegesis supporting, contextualising and/or amplifying the creative project that:

a.   reflects a substantial and thorough understanding of the conceptual, theoretical and/or cultural context, aims, and methods of the discipline/s;

b.   demonstrates the Candidate's overall knowledge of, and creative and innovative contribution within, the discipline/s;

c.   demonstrates how the research is a substantial and original contribution to knowledge;

d.   demonstrates evidence of a thorough, critical, and discriminatory review of the previous material in the relevant field of inquiry or creative arts genre or tradition; and

e.   includes any other matter agreed upon with the Candidate's Supervisor and appropriately approved.

4.24.   Both components must address the same central research question/s. The exegesis may be viewed both as a replication or re-visioning of the completed creative work as well as a reflective discourse on significant moments in the process of unfolding and revealing. It operates as both a noun (an artefact in its own right) and a verb (a re-enactment of the artefact as process). Through this dual articulation, the exegesis becomes a medium for validating the process of creative enquiry and expanding the merit of its outcomes.

4.25.   The permanent record of creative-production theses should use technologies appropriate to the field of study. Such material must be presented in a stable and commonly accepted format. Students should discuss the options with their Supervisors and with a ECU Librarian to ensure archival quality.

4.26.   A research thesis in the creative arts may consist of multiple components. Where the research contains a substantial creative component, the expected word count of the exegesis may be reduced (i.e. a possible maximum of 50,000 words for PhD and 30,000 words for Master of Arts). However, this is a guide and Candidates should discuss requirements and timing of submission of the exegesis and any exhibition or performance with their Supervisors and Associate Dean of Research prior to submission. In such discussions, Candidates should ensure that the timing of any performance or exhibition occurs within their period of enrolment.

4.27. Video-recording documentation may be a necessary attachment to the written exegesis both for examination purposes and, if the degree is awarded, for 'publishing' of the thesis in the University repository. Video-recordings may also be necessary where the Candidate's inquiry involves a series of stages in the investigation and where the focus is on process rather than on product.

4.28. Any published creative work or research output of which the student is a joint author may only be included in the thesis provided the work done by the Candidate is clearly identified in an attribution statement.

4.29. A PhD or Master of Arts in creative research disciplines is examined as a whole i.e., as a thesis comprised by both exegesis and creative project. All components must be submitted for examination. When determining file formats Candidates should consider any requirements or expectations of Research Assessments, Examiners and the online research repository. If unsure, Candidate should discuss the format of any files for submission (i.e. print, images, digital file, website, etc) with their Supervisors, Research Assessments and the Library.

Research Thesis Submission Requirements

4.30. The provision of an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS), with the inclusion of an abstract, is a Government requirement of all research awards. Candidates will be required to provide this abstract upon submission of their thesis. The abstract must be up to a maximum of 100 words and is intended to provide a summary to potential employers and other intuitions of the reason for the research, main results, and the impact and implications of the research. Candidates should prepare their abstract in consultation with their Supervisor.

4.31. Candidates who need further assistance with their abstract should contact their relevant HDR Communication Advisor for an appointment.

For further information: Research Journey, Preparing for Examination.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Guideline Owner is the *Dean, Graduate Research* and has overall responsibility for the content of these guidelines and their operation.

The *Manager, Graduate Research Services* is responsible for currency of information and provision of advice relating to these guidelines.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Rules

Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress

Policies

[Higher Degree by Research Academic Progression](#)
[Research Training](#)

Operational documents and resources

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
[Conducting Research with Integrity Policy](#)
[Forms, Policies and Guidelines](#)
[Guideline: HDR Thesis Examination](#)
[Institute of Professional Editors Limited](#)
[Research Journey, Preparing for Examination](#)
[University's Authorship and Publication Guidelines](#)

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Guideline Owner	Dean, Graduate Research
All Enquiries Contact	Manager, Graduate Research Services
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8. APPROVAL HISTORY

Guideline approved by:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Date guideline first approved:	9 May 2024
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