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Guidelines for the Examination of PhD and Masters by Research (MBR) Theses <u>without</u> Oral Examination

1. Standard of examination

PhD and Masters by Research Thesis

To qualify for the degree, the candidate is required:

a. to carry out independent research involving a comprehensive study of a scope and size that could normally be expected to be completed in the equivalent of three to four years full-time study for a PhD, and two years full-time study for a Masters by Research.

b. to make a substantial contribution to learning and demonstrate a capacity to relate research undertaken by the candidate to the discipline or disciplines within which it falls, at the standard internationally recognised for the degree in the relevant discipline or disciplines.

A thesis is to be a complete study incorporating an account of the result of the candidate's work during his/her approved course. The thesis must be a connected piece of writing, and can be presented as a:

1. <u>Traditional Thesis</u> – a series of sequential chapters outlining the research, or
2. <u>Thesis with Publication</u> – a combination of publishable work based on original research and a substantive written, integrating component. The thesis or component parts thereof may, if already published, be submitted in the published form. For more information see Procedure 5 – Requirements of a Thesis with Publication (http://intranet.ecu.edu.au/research/for-research-students/research-journey/forms-policies-and-guidelines).

<u>Contribution and Acknowledgement</u>

The candidate is required to appropriately acknowledge the contribution of others towards research contained in the thesis, including the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). Examiners should in such cases satisfy themselves that the contribution is sufficient to qualify the candidate for admission to the degree.

<u>Generative Artificial Intelligence</u>
Generative AI technologies and the applications of these technologies will continue to rapidly evolve and give rise to new considerations.

- It is recommended examiners follow current academic practices for use of these tools and consider copyright, confidentiality, and acknowledgement.
- Examiner reports should provide fair and appropriate human judgment of the candidate's research thesis based on principles of research integrity as outlined in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).
- Examiners must not submit any sensitive information to Artificial Intelligence tools, including personally identifiable information, the work of the candidate, any ECU data, or commercial in-confidence information.
- Higher Degree by Research candidates are informed of their obligations and requirements for the ethical conduct of research. In cases where Higher Degree by Research candidates have used AI within their research, they are expected to adhere to the principles of research integrity as outlined in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), including acknowledgment, honesty and transparency.

Theses are normally submitted for examination when both Supervisor(s) and the candidate agree that the thesis is ready for examination. However, to protect the rights of candidates, a candidate may submit a thesis for examination, even if this is against the advice of the Supervisor(s). Where a thesis has been submitted for examination without supervisor approval, the Associate Dean (Research) will arrange for an internal review of the thesis prior to the examination of the thesis.

Candidates in a Masters by Research program may have also completed coursework and practical work in addition to the thesis. The thesis, therefore, may contain only some of the written material by which the Candidate's qualifications for admission to the degree of Masters by Research is assessed.

PhD or Master of Arts in Creative Research Disciplines

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. 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.

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 substantial and thorough conceptual understanding of the discipline/s.
- the candidate's overall knowledge of, and original, creative, and innovative contribution within, the discipline/s.
- 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).

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

- reflects a substantial and thorough understanding of the conceptual, theoretical and/or cultural context, aims and methods of the discipline/s.
- demonstrates the candidate's overall knowledge of, and creative and innovative contribution within, the discipline/s.
- demonstrates how the research is a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.
- 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.
- includes any other matter agreed upon with the candidate's supervisor and appropriately approved.

Unlike traditional theses, which are assessed on a single thesis submitted for examination, creative research may consist of multiple components. Where the research contains a substantial creative component, the expected word count of the thesis/exegesis is correspondingly reduced. Please note that:

- In Performing Arts, an examiner may sometimes be asked to attend a live event/s prior to receiving the exegesis (or written component). In such cases, the examiner may be provided with a short contextualising document.
- In Visual Arts, the exegesis (40,000-60,000 words) will normally be provided to the examiners 4 to 6 weeks prior to the exhibition.
- Video-recording documentation may be attached to the written exegesis both for examination purposes and, if the degree is awarded, for 'publishing' of the thesis in the University library. Video-recordings may also be included where the candidate's inquiry involves a series of stages in the investigation and where the focus is on process rather than on product.

PhD and Master of Arts in Writing

The Doctor of Philosophy in the field of writing is designed for those who wish to undertake advanced studies in the field. The course duration is three-year full-time (minimum) and may be done part-time. The Master of Arts in the field of writing is normally completed after one year of full-time equivalent study. Both programs consist of a major creative project and a related critical essay/exegesis. The thesis will normally consist of the following:

A *creative project* (PhD: a substantial, original manuscript which is publishable; MBR: approximately 30,000 words of prose or equivalent) in one of the following forms:

- a novel (for a PhD) or a novella or part of a novel (for MBR)

- a book of poems (for a PhD) or a collection of poems (for MBR)
- a full-length stage/radio play
- a collection of short fiction
- a biographical/historical work, or
- other work of non-fiction

and a *critical essay*, or set of essays (PhD: 20,000 to 30,000 words in total; MBR: 10,000 words in total), which may involve one or more of the following in relation to the creative project:

- relevant theoretical issues
- conceptual and/or cultural context
- aims and methods
- relation to other writers or writing within the genre, or
- any other matter agreed upon with the candidate's supervisor and appropriately approved.

2. Examiners' reports and recommendations

Each examiner is asked to submit an independent report to Research Assessments, Student Administration. Examiners are asked to report as promptly as possible, and within six weeks of receiving the thesis or exegesis. If some delay appears likely, Research Assessments should be advised (telephone: (08) 6304 3911 or email: researchassessments@ecu.edu.au) so that alternative arrangements may be made if this seems to be desirable.

The Examiner's report comprises of:
- a recommendation
- a report which outlines the basis for the recommendation
- an assessment of the quality of work
- suggested amendments
- consideration for a university medal.

The examiner is asked to make a recommendation of one of the following:
a. passed without conditions;
b. passed, subject to minor amendments being made to the satisfaction of the principal supervisor;
c. passed, subject to major amendments being made to the satisfaction of the Associate Dean (Research);
d. revised and re-submitted for examination; or
e. failed.

An explanation of the recommendations is included at the end of this document.

Guidance for any revision or textual correction referred to in the examiner's summary

recommendation should be included. If your summary recommendation is for admission to the degree subject to minor amendments, please specify clearly what is required of the candidate before admission to the degree.

When a recommendation is made that the candidate be allowed to revise and resubmit the thesis, it is particularly important to give sufficiently specific indications of the nature of the required revisions.

Examiners are invited to provide reports on the basis of a written undertaking from the University that their reports will be treated on an *in confidence* basis. Other than as set out below, access to such reports will normally be limited to the Dean of the Graduate Research, Associate Dean of Research, supervisors(s), the candidate and, where appropriate, to committees considering the awarding of prizes for excellence in Higher Degrees by Research.

3. Subsequent University Procedures

The Dean, Graduate Research will determine the outcome of the thesis examination and recommend that: the thesis be passed in its current form; or the candidate be required to make amendments to the thesis that are checked and certified by the relevant Associate Dean (Research); or the thesis be revised and submitted for re-examination; or the thesis be failed.

4. Re-submission of a revised thesis

Where a thesis is to be revised and submitted for re-examination, the candidate will be required to submit the thesis within one year for re-examination, and it will normally be returned to those examiners who recommended the re-examination. A Candidate's thesis may only be revised and resubmitted once.

The examiner may only recommend one of the following classifications for the resubmitted thesis:

a. passed without conditions;
b. passed, subject to major amendments being made to the satisfaction of the relevant Associate Dean (Research).
c. failed.

More information

Research Assessments
Student Administration
Telephone: (61 8) 6304 3911
Email: researchassessments@ecu.edu.au

Guidelines for Examiner Recommendations

Recommendation	Length of time for corrections	Corrections reviewed by	Examples of typical issues that help guide decision making
Passed without conditions	-	-	• Overall Thesis Presentation: **minor** formatting or typographical errors that would be acceptable in a published format without rectification.
Passed, subject to minor amendments	6 weeks	Principal supervisor	• Overall Thesis Presentation: Errors in formatting or typographical errors that require rectification. *And, or:* • Missing Literature: that would strengthen the thesis. • Presentation of Data: additional summary tables/graphs suggested. • Creative component: Additional documentation and/or integration suggested
Passed, subject to major amendments	3 months	Associate Dean (Research)	• Overall Thesis Presentation: Errors in formatting or typographical errors that require rectification, or • Missing Literature: that would strengthen the thesis, or • Presentation of Data: additional summary tables/graphs suggested. *And, or:* ***Non-critical problems/issues*** *in one or more of the following areas: [for major problems possibly consider a Level d]* • Literature Review: out-of-date, limited relevant literature, gaps in review • Conceptual Framework: weak presentation of work/argument within an overall conceptual framework or illogical flow of ideas • Research Design/Methodology: issues where additional work required to strengthen/correct • Analysis, Statistics, Interpretation, Presentation of Data: issues where additional work required to strengthen/correct • Discussion and Interpretation: further work required regarding the discussion of results in a broader concept, answering research questions, conceptualisation and/or contribution to knowledge. • Creative component: Additional documentation and/or integration suggested

| Revised and re-submitted for examination | 12 months | Examiner | • <u>Overall Thesis Presentation</u>: Errors in formatting or typographical errors that require rectification, or
• <u>Missing Literature</u>: missing literature that would strengthen the thesis, or
• <u>Presentation of Data</u>: additional summary tables/graphs suggested.
• <u>Creative component: Additional documentation and/or integration suggested</u>

*And, or: **Major flaws/problems/issues** in one or more of the following areas:*

• <u>Literature Review</u>: out-of-date, limited relevant literature, gaps in review
• <u>Conceptual Framework</u>: weak presentation of work/argument within an overall conceptual framework or illogical flow of ideas
• <u>Research Design/Methodology</u>: issues where major additional work required to strengthen/correct
• <u>Analysis, Statistics, Interpretation, Presentation of Data</u>: issues where major additional work required to strengthen/correct
• <u>Discussion and Interpretation</u>: significant further work required regarding the discussion of results in a broader concept, answering research questions, conceptualisation and/or contribution to knowledge
• <u>Creative component</u>: significant further work required regarding documentation and/or integration

And or:
• not sufficiently substantial for the award of PhD/MBR. |
| Failed | Not applicable | - | • <u>Plagiarism, and/or Academic or Research Misconduct</u>

Or:

• Where of any of the issues/problems outlined in d) above are so significant that rectification by the candidate could not be achieved within a 12-month (full-time) period. |