



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
ADVICE TO EXAMINERS OF HIGHER DEGREES BY
RESEARCH: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND MASTERS
BY RESEARCH DEGREES
IN THE VISUAL AND MEDIA ARTS

Introduction

Higher degrees by research are awarded on satisfactory completion of supervised but independent research which is described in a thesis. Coursework may be included in the requirements for the degree, but this is generally minor and preliminary to the research project.

The Doctor of Philosophy program involves two to four years of full-time study, or the equivalent of part-time study. The Masters by Research program is completed in one to two years of full-time study, or the equivalent of part-time study. The PhD degree is awarded for “a substantial original contribution to knowledge” achieved in two to four years of full-time candidature. It is the outcome of a project treated with a greater depth of scholarship and research than is required for the Masters degree or possible in the shorter time allowed.

The Nature of the Thesis

The thesis for the degree of Masters by Research or Doctor of Philosophy in the visual and media arts may be presented in one of two forms: a conventional written thesis, or a thesis comprising the presentation of creative work and exegesis.

Creative Work and Exegesis

This form of thesis conveys the outcome of independent research through studio practice and related documentation, and may include production or creative work such as, for example, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, ceramics, installation, performance art, video or film, interactive multimedia, script, and so on.

The University advises candidates that the thesis should convey clearly the description of the project, how it relates to the field as a whole, how the project was pursued, what techniques were used and how successful they were, and the outcomes of the research. Since works of art cannot always present this information without ambiguity, it is appropriate that a written component is included with the exhibition of works.

This written component is termed the exegesis. It is not examined as a separate work but is considered together with the presentation of creative work, which presents the substantive original discourse of the thesis.

The purpose of the presentation of creative work, or creative practice outcome, is to provide a coherent demonstration that the candidate has achieved the intentions of the research program. The work that is presented and the presentation format (e.g. an

exhibition or an alternative presentational form) are determined by the candidate in consultation with the supervisory team, and approved by the Higher Degrees by Research Committee.

Arrangements will be made for examiners to travel to the exhibition, and to have an appropriate length of time for the examination.

Candidates may choose to make available to the examiners drawings, maquettes or sketches, and other supporting material which they feel may assist in an understanding and evaluation of the work. The location and display format for such work is an individual matter determined by the candidate in consultation with their supervisor. All the elements submitted should be placed in context in the exegesis.

The purpose of the exegesis is to elucidate the exhibition and place it in a disciplinary context. It may provide guidance to the examiner regarding the sequence of development in the work exhibited. The exegesis is in no sense a separate exercise in art theoretical discourse, which would be undertaken only in the case of a theoretical thesis as described below. The exegesis will be a minimum of 25,000 words and a maximum of 50,000 words for a PhD degree and a minimum of 12,500 words and a maximum of 25,000 words for a Masters degree.

Examiners will be given the exegesis at a date agreed upon by the supervision team, which may be prior to, on the day of, or after (within 3 months of) the presentation of the creative work. Examiners will return the exegesis on completion of the examination.

Theoretical Thesis

The theoretical thesis is a written document which conforms in all respects to the norms in the humanities and social sciences. Examiners will be sent a temporarily-bound copy of the written thesis and asked to complete the examination and provide a report within six weeks of its receipt.

Consultation with University Staff

The University is concerned that examinations are conducted with proper regard to equity and conflicts of interest, and that no impression to the contrary is given. Examiners may meet with University staff during the examination process, but are asked not to discuss the exhibition, candidature or assessment of the candidate. The candidate's supervisors are not excluded from such meetings, but at least one University staff member who is not involved in the supervision process must also be present.

The Examiner's Report

You are asked to complete the online Examiner's Recommendation Form with your recommendation on the outcome of the examination and to provide a written report in English giving the reasons for the recommendation. The report should be complete in itself; **annotations in the thesis are not a substitute for the written report** but can be sent via email or post if you have made any typographical corrections in the thesis. Examiners are asked to report independently and then upload their report and recommendation electronically.

Examiners may require the candidate to respond to questions on the thesis. If there are matters that require elucidation, please send a list of questions to the Examinations Officer HDR (see below for contact details). The responses will be sent to you to enable you to complete your examination.

There is no prescribed format for the report as conventions vary between disciplines but it should be at least 1 page and can be up to 10 pages, depending on the changes required. Reports can be structured commenting on the learning outcomes of the thesis or a chapter-by-chapter review of the thesis. You can also include any suggestions to the student regarding future publications and a list of typographical errors if appropriate

Your response is requested within eight weeks of receipt of the thesis. If circumstances arise that prevent you completing the examination by the due date, please contact the Examinations Officer HDR.

Standard required for the degrees

On completion of research training, students should have met Course Learning Outcomes applicable to their degree.

You are asked to assess whether the student has demonstrated the following Course Learning Outcomes for the Doctor of Philosophy degree or Master by Research degree:

Doctoral degree	Master by research degree
Demonstrated systematic and critical understanding in one or more specialist fields or discipline areas by planning and generating a substantial and original contribution that advances scholarship or professional practice.	Demonstrated an advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more discipline areas by generating substantial contribution to knowledge through the use of appropriate research principles and methods.
Synthesised, applied and analysed existing and new knowledge in one or more discipline areas to develop new concepts or interpretations through engagement in ethical research, critical reflection, continuous evaluation and demonstration of research skills.	Applied critical analysis and reflection to ethically research, synthesize and evaluate complex information, problems, concepts, interpretations and theories to demonstrate cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice.
Demonstrated autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability, leadership, initiative, resilience and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or scholar.	Demonstrated autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability, initiative, resilience and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.

The Recommendation Form

Examiners are asked to select one of the five following recommendations.

Recommendation 1 (the degree be awarded)

This recommendation is appropriate where the thesis meets the standard required for the degree. This includes cases where there are small style or typographical errors that do not impact on the substance of the thesis, but should be corrected in the Library copy.

Recommendation 2

Make this recommendation where the thesis meets the standards required for the degree but some revisions are required that affect the presentation of the thesis rather

than the substance; that is changes that can be approved by the Head of School rather than requiring your input. Please identify in your report the changes and corrections that should be made by the candidate. Your report will be used to provide guidance to the candidate in making the changes, and to the Head of School in determining that the changes are satisfactory.

Recommendation 2.1 (the degree be awarded provided that the textual errors and other minor matters identified in my report are corrected to the satisfaction of the Head of School)

Make this recommendation where there are minor textual errors or omissions, or minor corrections to passages of text are required.

Recommendation 2.2 (the degree be awarded provided that the matters identified in my report are addressed to the satisfaction of the Head of School)

Make this recommendation if substantial changes or corrections are required to improve the presentation of the thesis. This may include rewriting passages of text, addressing minor omissions, and correcting extensive textual and typographical errors.

Recommendation 3 (the degree not be awarded but the candidate be permitted to revise the thesis in response to the examiners' reports and present if for re-examination)

Make this recommendation if the thesis requires substantial revision and must be returned to the examiners for re-examination. Please state clearly in your report the weaknesses and shortcomings of the thesis which led to your recommendation. Your report will be used to provide guidance to the candidate on how to revise the thesis for re-examination. The Regulation directs that, as far as possible, the revised thesis should be examined by the original examiners. When the revision is almost complete we will approach you to ask if you are prepared to act again.

Recommendations 4.1 and 4.2 (the degree not be awarded but the appropriate degree of master be awarded) (NOT APPLICABLE TO MASTERS DEGREES)

The PhD degree is awarded for "a substantial original contribution" achieved in two to four years of full-time candidature. It is the outcome of a project treated with a greater depth of scholarship and research than is required for the Masters degree or possible in the shorter time allowed. Recommendation 4 allows an examiner to recommend the

award of a Masters degree for a thesis submitted for a PhD. However, in no sense is a Masters degree a “failed PhD”, and this recommendation will only be appropriate in the few cases where the thesis is at the standard of a Masters degree rather than at the doctoral level. A thesis with particular deficiencies rather than simply lacking in depth should receive another response.

If you make one of these recommendations please state clearly in your report the basis for the recommendation. If you make recommendation 4.2 please indicate in your report the minor changes and corrections that should be made by the candidate before the thesis is accepted.

Recommendation 5 (the degree not be awarded)

If you make recommendation 5, please state clearly in your report the weaknesses and major shortcomings of the thesis which led to your recommendation.

Availability of the report

The examiners reports are given to the candidate at the conclusion of the examination process. In recognising the importance of a visible research community, Deakin University encourages examiners to permit their identity to be disclosed to the candidate; but also respects and abides by the wishes of those who request to remain anonymous.

As a courtesy, a copy of the report for each examiner is sent to the other examiners of the thesis at the end of the examination process.

Communication with the University during the Examination

You are asked to conduct all communication in relation to the examination through:

Examinations Officer HDR
Deakin Research
Deakin University
Geelong Waurin Ponds Campus
Locked Bag 20000
Geelong, VIC 3220
Australia
telephone: 03 5227 3492 [international: +61 3 5227 3492]
facsimile: 03 5227 2175 [international: +61 3 5227 2175]
e-mail: research-examinations@deakin.edu.au

All reports are to be submitted through the online system as a single pdf document.

Return of the Thesis

If you requested a hard copy, please return the thesis to the Examinations Officer HDR at the address given above. It is acceptable to return the thesis by surface mail.

Comments on the Examination process

We welcome constructive comments and advice on our examination processes, and encourage you to provide them to the Examinations Officer HDR or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the address given above.