

Dissertation Management

1.0 Purpose

2.0 Scope

3.0 Procedure

3.1 Supervision | 3.2 Managing the dissertation | 3.3 Assessment | 3.4 Termination of enrolment

4.0 Definitions

5.0 Information

6.0 Related policy documents and support documents

1.0 Purpose

This Procedure provides a framework for the management of a significant research project that leads to a dissertation (or equivalent) within a coursework program across all disciplines.

2.0 Scope

This Procedure applies to the following coursework programs that lead to an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification: AQF Level 8 Bachelor (Honours) programs, AQF Level 8 Graduate Diploma programs, and AQF Level 9 Masters (Coursework) and Masters (Extended) programs where students are required to complete a supervised research-based project. The research project will lead to the production of a dissertation, thesis, exegesis, or equivalent component such as a body of studio work or performance for visual and performing arts programs.

This Procedure does not apply to AQF Level 9 Masters (Research) and AQF Level 10 Doctoral programs which are managed as per the *Higher Degree by Research Policy*.

The framework outlined in this Procedure applies to all students, regardless of discipline. Specific functions, responsibilities and the relationship between supervisor and student may vary according to the School and the research discipline, especially with regard to the provision of physical resources.

3.0 Procedure

A dissertation (or its equivalent) within the Bachelor Honours, Graduate Diploma, Masters (Coursework) or Masters (Extended) program is normally the first piece of extended research and writing undertaken by students during their university studies. It is the established means of demonstrating capacity for future independent research at Masters (Research) and Doctoral levels. The dissertation is an important part of training towards higher degree by research studies, because it allows students to begin to locate themselves in their particular research culture or tradition.

Criteria for eligibility to undertake a dissertation is specified on the Programs and Courses website and is approved by Programs Committee.

3.1 Supervision

The dissertation is normally completed at the University.

A dissertation supervisor is to be appropriately qualified in the relevant discipline, at least one qualification higher for the purpose of supervising the dissertation, normally involved in research, and a member of the Group and/or School that hosts the degree program in which the student is enrolled. Students will normally have one principal supervisor; an additional principal or associate supervisor may be appointed where appropriate. If approval is given for a dissertation to be undertaken at another institution, at least one supervisor must be an academic staff member of Griffith University.

3.2 Managing the dissertation

3.2.1 Choosing a research topic

The research topic should be chosen using the following considerations:

- Is there a recognised need for research in the area?
- Is the research achievable within the allocated time?
- Does the topic match the student's capabilities and interests?
- Is the research area open to further professional development?
- Are research facilities and/or data available to the student to undertake all necessary research in the topic area?
- Has an assessment of compliance with [sanctions and export trade controls legislation](#) occurred?
- Is there a supervisor(s) available?

3.2.2 Research project overview

The student must prepare a research project overview in consultation with the proposed supervisor. The purpose of the overview is to protect the student from investing effort in a research project that cannot be successfully completed within the constraints of time and resources. It should indicate:

- the field of research;
- the proposed research question(s);
- the anticipated outcome(s);
- the research method(s);
- project timeline, budget, ethics, risk assessment (where required);
- processes required for obtaining ethical approval (where required); and
- an indicative bibliography.

The proposed supervisor's comments on the research project overview will be submitted to the relevant Program Director for approval.

3.2.3 Milestones Plan

When approved to commence a research project, the student may be asked to complete a Milestones Plan in consultation with their supervisor. The Milestones Plan is a checklist for the student, supervisor and Program Director to use in planning and managing a student's progression and should therefore be completed as soon as possible after approval. It is recommended that a Milestones Plan be completed for all students.

3.2.4 Management of the research project

Management of the research project includes project resources, project management and the student-supervisor professional relationship. The professional relationship between the student and supervisor is relatively unstructured to meet the diverse needs of students and to be able to deal with the range of individual issues which arise at any time during the production of the research work.

A supervisory relationship is a qualitatively different form of teaching and learning. At the Honours, Graduate Diploma and Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) level it is assumed that the student will be able to work independently for most of the time.

The management of the research project between the student and supervisor can be enhanced by:

Supervisor's Responsibilities

- recognising that the supervisor has a responsibility to ensure the research skills training is conducted in an effective manner in alignment with the program requirements;
- establishing regular meeting times, identifying a timetable for completion of the various elements of the research proposal, and specifying when written work is to be completed so that progress can be monitored;
- establishing a clear relationship between all parties if there are two supervisors;
- providing adequate feedback, both in terms of the timing and comments;
- ensuring availability of appropriate resources for projects that require materials, equipment, consumables and/or technical support;
- providing guidance as to the delineation of a clear topic, methods to use for the research, the relevant body of literature to consult and the timing of the research and writing aspects of the project; and
- keeping notes of advice given at meetings.

Student's Responsibilities

- submitting draft work in a readable form, and indicating briefly where the piece of work fits into the plan of the dissertation as a whole;
- attending meetings with a set of clear questions to be answered; and
- keeping notes of advice given at meetings.

It is expected that students and their supervisor(s) will be able to establish and maintain a close consultative relationship. It is recognised, however, that there may be occasions when differences of a personal or professional nature may mitigate against the development of a productive working relationship. Should problems of this nature arise, students should immediately bring this to the attention of the relevant Program Director and ask them to consider appointing an alternative supervisor.

3.2.5 Changing a research topic and/or title

Changes to the proposed topic and/or title should be discussed with the supervisor and then approved by the Program Director. A copy of this approval should be noted on the student file.

3.2.6 Dissertation format

The format of the dissertation will vary depending on the discipline and commonly accepted standards for academic research in that discipline. The preferred approach for a dissertation is outlined in Appendix 1. School or discipline guidelines and expectations for the dissertation format should be provided to the student.

Early consideration of the development and presentation of the material, in consultation with the supervisor, is recommended. The task of writing the dissertation or producing the practical work is part of the research process and is often best undertaken progressively.

3.2.7 Length of the dissertation

A dissertation will demonstrate the student's capacity to report on the research in a clear and succinct manner. The extent of a dissertation will vary according to the topic, discipline and credit point load. The supervisor should discuss appropriate word limits and expectations with the student.

The required length of the dissertation or requirements for artefacts will be included in the Course Profile.

3.2.8 Referencing and bibliographic details

Where work or publications from other researchers and third parties have been included in the dissertation, this must be referenced appropriately within the dissertation and appear in the bibliography. Failure to adequately acknowledge sources could lead to a concern that a breach of academic integrity has occurred. Students should consult their supervisors on the most appropriate form of referencing for their discipline.

3.2.9 Use of copyrightable materials

There is no requirement for students to seek permission to use third party copyrightable materials (such as images, diagrams, maps or the author's published articles whose copyright belongs to the publishers) in their dissertation for assessment purposes or for use as an exemplar on Learning@Griffith.

Permission is required where a dissertation is to be published to an external audience. The student will be required to sign a statement certifying that they have obtained all required permissions.

3.2.10 Use of confidential information

Confidential information may be included in the dissertation. Supervisors will advise on the management of confidential information and projects.

3.2.11 Submission of the dissertation

Dissertations and any accompanying supporting materials for examination will be submitted electronically for examination. By enrolling in a course and submitting assessment, students declare their acceptance of the University's Academic Integrity Statement as published in the Course Profile. The Course Profile will identify how the dissertation should be submitted.

The submission deadline for dissertations will be Friday of Week 13 for all students. The date for submission of the dissertation will be identified in the Course Profile.

The Program Director may approve an extension to submit the dissertation no greater than 28 calendar days on the grounds of illness, accident, disability, bereavement, or other compassionate circumstances. The length of the extension will be commensurate with the number of days the student was unable to work on their dissertation. Where an extension is approved, students may be delayed for higher degree by research scholarships as their results may not be available in time for the current selection process.

Students may also apply for special consideration on the grounds of illness, accident, disability, bereavement, technical issues or compassionate circumstances¹ and if you can demonstrate your performance was seriously affected. An application for special consideration should be provided with the dissertation to the examiners. If approved, an

¹ Examples of compassionate circumstances include serious illness of a family member or close relative, significant and unexpected employment problems or pressures, significant relationship problems etc

application for special consideration may result in an adjustment to the percentage marks for the dissertation. Examiners are to advise whether special consideration was applied to the percentage marks for the dissertation.

3.2.12 Seminar presentation

Some programs may require a presentation of the major findings of the research project in a seminar format. The seminar is used as a 'viva voce' to check the student's conceptual understanding of the findings of the piece of supervised research that they have independently undertaken. It is usual for the examiners of the dissertation to also assess the seminar presentation as one of the elements contributing to the mark they assign to the dissertation.

3.2.13 Storage of dissertation and related materials

Examiner feedback will be provided to the student after they have received advice of their grade or Honours classification. Examiners of Graduate Diploma and Masters degree (Extended and Coursework) dissertations may recommend changes to the dissertation. When the Dean (Learning and Teaching) is satisfied that the student has completed all academic requirements for the postgraduate award or accepts the recommendation of the Honours Program Director for the Honours classification, the student will lodge a digital copy of the dissertation and any supporting materials with the host School.

The School will store the dissertation on the Coursework Dissertations and Theses Repository for record keeping. Any related materials which are not submitted in a digital form must be managed locally by Schools as records. Dissertations will be retained for a period of 5 years after the date of submission. Copies of failed dissertations will be retained for a minimum of 1 year after the end of the appeal period or last action. It is recommended that students retain their own digital copy of their dissertation and related materials.

3.2.14 Permission to use Dissertations as Exemplars

Past dissertations may be provided to students as exemplars for standard setting and moderation activities. This is managed locally by Schools with copies being loaded to the relevant course or program site in Learning@Griffith. Written permission must be obtained from the student to have their dissertation used in this way, and stored so that it can be readily retrieved if ever required.

Dissertations that are used as exemplars should not disclose the contributor's identity. Students have the right to deny this request.

3.3 Assessment

The assessment plan for the dissertation courses is included in the Course Profile.

3.3.1 Dissertation marking criteria

A set of guidelines for examination of the dissertation will be provided to the student and the examiners. Dissertations should be evaluated based on the following requirements, within the context of the field of research:

- a contribution to knowledge through independent research;
- evidence of the exercise of scholarly judgment;
- clear presentation - including definition of research questions, organisation of argument, clarity in terms of writing style and illustrative materials;
- execution of research;
- selection of appropriate techniques and justification of methodology;

- ability to locate, use and synthesise published literature and source materials;
- ability to analyse data and to present logical conclusions; and
- ability to present in a seminar format the findings of the research, where applicable.

3.3.2 Dissertation supervisor and examiners

Where there is a supervisor assessment component for conduct of a dissertation project, a set of guidelines for assessing conduct of the project will be provided to the supervisor. Supervisors will be requested to include a statement outlining their contribution to the dissertation preparation.

Where a Program Director or Dean (Learning and Teaching) is also a dissertation supervisor or examiner, they must consider whether there is a conflict of interest and act in accordance with the *Conflict of Interest Policy*. The supervisor may not be an examiner.

The Program Director (or Dissertation Convenor where appropriate) will recommend to the Dean (Learning and Teaching) at least two primary examiners to assess the dissertation. A reserve examiner may be recommended at the same time. Examiners are normally internal to the University; an external examiner may be appointed. In special cases approved by the Dean (Learning and Teaching), additional examiners may be appointed to conduct the initial examination of the dissertation. Examiners will provide a percentage mark to indicate their assessment of the dissertation along with a report that addresses the marking criteria. Examiner identity shall remain confidential until results have been finalised.

3.3.2.1 Appointment of additional examiner(s)

The percentage marks awarded by the examiners for the dissertation (excluding the mark for the colloquia/seminar presentation and the supervisor mark) should be within 9 marks. Where the spread is 10 marks or more, the Program Director will investigate and resolve the discrepancy as follows:

- In the first instance, each examiner is requested to reconsider their result in the light of the report and result submitted by the other examiners whose identity shall remain confidential.
- In the event of the discrepancy still existing, an additional examiner (not the supervisor) shall be appointed. The additional examiner shall not be provided with the previous examiners' marks.
- Where an additional examiner is appointed, the final dissertation mark shall be decided by averaging the two closest results of the set of examiners.

3.3.3 Marks and grades for coursework courses

Marks and grades for coursework courses within the program are determined in accordance with the *Assessment Policy for Staff*. Provisions related to supplementary assessment, special consideration and deferred assessment as specified in the *Assessment Procedure for Students* apply to coursework courses in all programs.

3.3.4 Marks and grades for dissertation courses

3.3.4.1 Honours classification

The criteria for examination of the Honours dissertation, the methodology for calculating the minimum percentage for the dissertation, including the marks from each examiner and, where relevant, other components such as the supervisor's assessment, and the student's performance in the presentation of their dissertation in an Honours colloquia/seminar will be approved by the School Assessment Board. If a supervisor's

assessment is included, this shall not contribute more than 30% of the total dissertation course assessment.

For a one year Honours program, the class of honours degree to be awarded each student will be determined based on Program Grade Point Average (GPA) and a minimum percentage for the dissertation as described below.

For a four or more year Honours program, the methodology for calculating the Honours classification will be included in the Program Proposal for approval.

The percentage mark for the dissertation is calculated from the individual examiners' marks and other components of the dissertation assessment where applicable.

CLASS OF HONOURS	MINIMUM DISSERTATION PERCENTAGE	GRADE FOR MINIMUM DISSERTATION PERCENTAGE	PROGRAM GPA
Class I	80%	7	6.200 – 7.000
Class IIA	70%	6	5.650 – 6.199
Class IIB	60%	5	5.000 – 5.649
Class III	50%	4	4.000 – 4.999

A student who achieves a Program GPA of less than 4 and/or less than 50% for the dissertation is not awarded the Honours degree.

The relevant Program Director recommends the Honours classification for each student for approval via the School Assessment Board.

Students may appeal their honours classification in accordance with the *Student Review and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

3.3.4.2 Dissertation percentage for postgraduate coursework programs

Where the postgraduate coursework program includes a significant research component in the form of a dissertation, the percentage mark for the dissertation is calculated from the individual examiners' marks and a grade calculated based on minimum percentage as per the Honours calculation.

MINIMUM DISSERTATION PERCENTAGE	GRADE FOR MINIMUM DISSERTATION PERCENTAGE
80%	7
70%	6
60%	5
50%	4

3.4 Termination of enrolment

Enrolment in an Honours degree shall be cancelled and the candidature terminated, if:

- the student advises that they wish to withdraw from the Honours degree; or
- the student withdraws from all courses without having obtained leave of absence from the degree; or
- the student withdraws from the dissertation; or
- the student fails to lodge their Honours dissertation by the due date, including any approved extensions.

Enrolment in a coursework postgraduate program will be cancelled according to provisions in the *Enrolment Procedure*.

3.4.1 Consequences of failing a coursework course

In a one year Honours program, if an Honours student is awarded a fail grade, normally the student is not permitted to repeat the failed course or undertake an alternate course.

The consequence is that the student has not completed the required 80 credit points of the degree and so is not awarded the Honours degree. In this case, the student's academic record will show the final grade for all courses attempted, including the dissertation, and the student's enrolment is cancelled and honours candidature terminated.

In special circumstances, the student may be permitted to repeat the failed course or to undertake an alternate course as a replacement for the failed course. The Program Director may recommend this course of action to the Chair, School Assessment Board provided that:

- the student has only failed one course;
- there are extenuating circumstances which contributed to the fail grade; and
- the student can complete the replacement course within the three-year time limit.

Where the student has been permitted to repeat the failed course or undertake an alternate course, all attempts at coursework courses will be included in the calculation of the Grade Point Average.

Students in a four year (or more) Honours program or postgraduate coursework program that fail a course are subject to normal policy provisions.

3.5.1 Consequences of failing the dissertation

Students are not able to resubmit a dissertation that has been awarded a failing grade.

Where an Honours student is given a fail grade for the dissertation, the Honours degree will not be awarded, the student's enrolment will be cancelled and honours candidature terminated.

Students that are completing a Bachelor Honours program which is four or more years in length may transfer to the related Bachelor program.

Students that are completing a postgraduate coursework program will be subject to the provisions identified in their degree requirements.

4.0 Definitions

AQF level is the nomenclature used in the AQF to demonstrate the relative complexity and/or depth of achievements and the autonomy required of graduates of AQF qualifications to demonstrate that achievement e.g. AQF level 1 has the lowest complexity and AQF Level 10 has the highest complexity.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is a national system of qualifications encompassing all post-compulsory education. Higher education awards are located at AQF Levels 5-10.

Award program is an approved course of study that leads to a qualification located at levels 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10 of the Australian Qualifications Framework and meets the corresponding specifications (including the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors).

Bachelor Honours Degree (AQF Level 8) is typically equivalent to one year of full-time study, normally taken after the completion of a three year bachelor degree, referred to as “**end-on honours**”. For the Bachelor Honours degree the University grants the award of the Bachelor of X (Honours).

Bachelor Honours degree (AQF Level 8) of four or more years in length may be studied concurrently with the Bachelor degree, with the honours typically included in the final year/s of the program, referred to as “**concurrent honours**”. In a concurrent Bachelor Honours Degree there is no differentiated study program and all students awarded the degree receive one award the Bachelor of X (Honours). The requirements for the “**concurrent honours**” program are set out in the *Qualifications Procedure*. The term “**embedded honours**” (to be phased out) refers to the award of Honours on the basis of a differentiated study program within a Bachelor degree (AQF Level 7) program which is four or more years (full-time equivalent) in length. Students who meet specified admission criteria may apply to change programs to the AQF Level 8 Bachelor Honours degree and on successful completion receive one award the Bachelor of X (Honours). The requirements for the “**embedded honours**” program are set out in the *Qualifications Procedure*.

Coursework is a method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge that does not include a major research component.

Discipline refers to a defined branch of study or learning consistent with the field of education classification in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). The ASCED includes 12 broad fields of education with each classification further divided into narrow and detailed fields of education. Some discipline qualifications are designed to deepen knowledge, skills and application, and different discipline qualifications are designed to broaden knowledge, skills and application through further learning.

Dissertation refers to a coherent exposition of a research study in which the research objectives, relationship to other scholarly work, methodology and strategies employed and the results obtained are identified, analysed and evaluated.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) means a higher degree by research that is a Research Masters or Research Doctorate. A **Research Masters** means a Level 9 qualification as described in the Australian Qualifications Framework and where a minimum of two-thirds of the program of learning is for research, research training and independent study. A **Research Doctorate** means a Level 10 qualification as described in the Australian Qualifications Framework and where a minimum of two years of the program of learning, and typically two-thirds of the qualification, is research.

Milestone Plan refers to a checklist for the student, supervisor and Program Director to use in planning and managing a student’s progression and completion of the program.

Qualification type is the nomenclature used in the AQF to describe each category of AQF qualification e.g. Bachelor degree, Bachelor degree Honours, Graduate Certificate, Masters degree (Coursework). Each qualification type is defined by a descriptor expressed as learning outcomes.

Research comprises and includes original, exploratory, experimental, applied, clinically or work-based and other forms of creative work undertaken systematically to increase knowledge and understanding, deploying a range of research principles and methodologies. Research is specified in the learning outcomes for the Doctoral Degree, the Masters Degree and the Bachelor Honours Degree. The amount and type of research in each of these qualifications types vary.

Research Component Within the requirements of a program a course or set of courses that include as learning outcomes the capacity to plan, execute and report on the findings of a research project may be designated as a research component. Courses with learning outcomes requiring students to demonstrate their ability to collate research and findings on a particular topic, to apply their

knowledge in analysing this information and incorporating it into a written response meet the research component requirement.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Presentation and format

A dissertation should be a coherent exposition of a research study and follow an ordered sequence in which the executive summary, research objectives, relationship to other scholarly work, methodology and strategies employed, and the results obtained are identified, analysed and evaluated. The main text should include a discussion of the conclusions or results. All written components will be in English.

The following strategies may be employed in the work leading to the submission of a dissertation or its equivalent:

- definition or location of a problem, topic or theme;
- identification of a theoretical framework and/or methodology;
- literature review, to establish the relationship of the problem, topic or theme to the scholarly context;
- accumulation of relevant data or creative work;
- analysis of information or material obtained;
- arrival at conclusions in light of material analysed; and
- writing of the dissertation or production of studio/performance work.

A high standard of presentation is required. Students are encouraged to use a leading word-processing or desktop publishing computer package to ensure that presentation of text and any illustrative matter is both clear and attractive to the reader. A major consideration in the presentation of the work is the ease with which an examiner can undertake the task of examination.

It is recommended that a written dissertation be prepared as follows:

- The font size should be at least 10 point;
- The lines of the text should be in 1.5 or double line spacing;
- Each page should have a left-hand margin of at least 3cm;
- Top, bottom and right-hand margins should be at least 2cm;
- The pages should be numbered sequentially; and
- Depending on the referencing system used, references/footnotes should be consistent and appear either in the body of the text, at the bottom of each page, at the end of each chapter or at the end of the dissertation.

The front page of the written dissertation should contain the following information:

- the full title of the dissertation;
- the full name and academic qualification of the student;
- the name of the Group in which the program was undertaken, and the name of the University;
- the name of the degree for which the dissertation is submitted including the words: "Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of"; and
- the date (month and year) of submission of the dissertation.

The contents of the written dissertation normally should take the following order:

- a short synopsis or abstract;
- a signed statement of originality including the words: "This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.";

- a table of contents, a list of all diagrams and illustrations and a list of supplementary material if any;
- a statement acknowledging the extent and nature of any assistance received in the pursuit of the research and preparation of the dissertation;
- the main text;
- appendices (including a confidential appendix where appropriate);
- the bibliography/references; and
- other material that is separate from the dissertation and submitted as part, or in support, of the dissertation such as computer code, films, DVDs, models, music scores, recordings, etcetera.

Diagrams, figures, schemes and tables should be incorporated into the text and numbered sequentially.

5.0 Information

Title	Dissertation Management Procedure
Document number	2024/0000011
Purpose	This Procedure identifies the expectations for managing a dissertation, thesis, exegesis or equivalent component at the University, including the role for supervisors in supporting students and candidature management.
Audience	Staff
Category	Academic
Subcategory	Learning and Teaching
Approval date	7 March 2024
Effective date	Trimester 1 2024
Review date	2028
Policy advisor	Senior Manager, Student Credentials
Approving authority	Provost

6.0 Related Policy Documents and Supporting Documents

Legislation	Higher Educations Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
Policy	Admission Policy Assessment Policy Conflict of Interest Policy Higher Degree by Research Policy Student Academic Integrity Policy Responsible Conduct of Research Policy

Procedure

Admission Procedure

Assessment Procedure for Staff

Assessment Procedure for Students

Qualifications Procedure
