

Higher Degree by Research Examination

1.0 Purpose

2.0 Scope

3.0 Procedure

[3.1 Before Submission](#) | [3.2 Submission](#) | [3.3 Examination](#)

4.0 Definitions

5.0 Information

6.0 Related policy documents and supporting documents

1.0 Purpose

This procedure supports the *Higher Degree by Research Policy* by detailing the requirements and procedures for the preparation, submission and examination of higher degree by research (HDR) theses at Griffith University.

2.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all HDR candidates and to all staff and HDR thesis examiners responsible for monitoring and managing the submission and examination of HDR theses.

3.0 Procedure

For the purpose of this procedure, the term 'principal supervisor' refers to both a sole principal supervisor and the administrative co-principal supervisor in a co-principal supervisory arrangement.

3.1 Before Submission

Acceptable thesis formats

3.1.1

The structure of an HDR thesis will be decided in consultation with the principal supervisor and will conform to an acceptable thesis format for the relevant discipline. A thesis may be in the form of:

- A text with conventional chapters;
- A text containing a combination of peer-reviewed publications, articles undergoing peer-review or revision, and conventional chapters (refer to the Inclusion of Papers within the Thesis website for requirements, including additional framing chapters and linking text where appropriate);
- A text containing a combination of peer-reviewed publications, and articles undergoing peer-review or revision (refer to the Inclusion of Papers within the Thesis website for requirements, including additional framing chapters and linking text where appropriate); or
- Creative, visual or professional practice products (e.g. musical manuscript, audio-visual materials, models, designs, computer software, digital material or other non-written material) together with an exegesis (refer to the Theses with Creative Components webpage).

3.1.2

The [Preparing Your Thesis](#) website sets out the length, structure and formatting requirements for HDR theses.

Notice of Intention to Submit the Thesis

3.1.3

Candidates must complete and lodge an Intention to Submit the HDR Thesis form at least two months prior to the intended thesis submission date. Any matters that will prevent the candidate from submitting the thesis by the date proposed must be addressed prior to lodgement of this notice. Upon approval of this notice the process to appoint examiners will be initiated (refer to sections 3.1.6 to 3.1.8 below).

Eligibility to submit

3.1.4

To be eligible to submit their HDR thesis for examination, candidates must have:

- A current enrolment in the HDR program;
- Have completed research to the standard and specification of the program;
- Successfully completed all compulsory milestones, or received an exemption from the milestone/s (refer to the HDR Academic Progress Procedure);
- Successfully completed all prescribed coursework components of the program (refer to the Assessment Policy);
- Been enrolled for at least the minimum duration of candidature as specified in the HDR Enrolments and Variations to Candidature Procedure and the Program and Courses website; and
- If a doctoral candidate, published or have accepted for publication one peer-reviewed research output or non-traditional research output (refer to the HDR Academic Progress Procedure).

3.1.5

Any outstanding program fees or charges must be paid prior to the examination of the thesis (refer also to the [Steps to submitting the thesis](#) webpage).

Appointment of examiners

3.1.6

Upon receipt of a Nomination of Examiners form, the principal supervisor will nominate three examiners and a Chairperson of Examiners who will meet the requirements for appointment outlined in the *Appointment of HDR Examiners and Chairperson of Examiners Guidelines*, including being independent of the conduct of the candidate's research and without any real or perceived major conflict of interest.

3.1.7

The names of nominated and confirmed examiners (or any adjudicators appointed according to section 3.3.13) are not released to the candidate until after a decision on the examination outcome has been determined, unless the live performance component examination applies.

3.1.8

In cases where a confidentiality agreement is required, the Griffith Graduate Research School will prepare and arrange execution of an examiners confidentiality agreement prior to the thesis being provided to the examiner.

3.2 Submission

Thesis content and format requirements

3.2.1

Candidates are wholly responsible for the content and submission of the thesis for examination.

3.2.2

The thesis research content must:

- Address a single, significant research question/theme in field of research or area of professional practice;
- Constitute original work which is unified and coherent in its content;
- Meet the thesis requirements for the program as set out in the Qualifications Procedure and the Program and Courses website;
- Only include research that has been completed under supervision during the period of enrolment for the degree; and
- Not include work which has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for any other degree at Griffith University or similar award from another institution.

3.2.3

To be submitted for examination, the thesis format must:

- Be appropriate to the field of research in which the thesis is based.
- Include all structure and content requirements as set out on the Formatting your thesis website, including the appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others in the thesis.
- Candidates will include a signed statement of originality in the thesis. Additional acknowledgments or statements include:
 - Where candidates employ the service of a professional editor for their thesis, the candidate must include the name of the editor and a brief description of the service provided.
 - Where the thesis includes published work which includes authors in addition to the candidate, the candidate must complete a Statement of Contribution to a Co-authored Published Paper for each publication, signed by co-author/s and the principal supervisor.
 - Where the research required ethics clearance, candidates must provide confirmation in their thesis submission that appropriate ethics approval has been granted for the research project. A thesis should include a copy of the ethics approval document, and the approved recruitment, participant information and consent materials.

3.2.4

Any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the preparation of the thesis must be ethical, responsible and in keeping with principles of academic and research integrity including honesty, transparency, fairness and accountability. Candidates will appropriately declare, attribute and acknowledge use of AI, in compliance with the University's Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and the Academic Misconduct Policy – HDR Candidates. See also the [GGRS Thesis Preparation Overview](#) webpage guidance on editorial assistance limitations in thesis preparation and the [Research Integrity Resource Sheet #17 \(Artificial Intelligence and Research Outputs\)](#).

Approval to submit for examination

3.2.5

Providing all submission requirements set out in sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.4 are fulfilled, the principal supervisor will be asked to endorse to the Dean (Research) or nominee the thesis for examination and, in doing so, confirm that:

- They have read the thesis submission in its final form;
- The thesis is presented in a form appropriate to the field of research and meets the University thesis preparation requirements as set out in this procedure and the [Formatting your thesis website](#);
- To the best of the supervisor's knowledge, the submission complies with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018 and the University's research and academic integrity policies; and
- The thesis is prima facie worthy of examination.

3.2.6

The submission date is the date the thesis is uploaded to myGriffith, following approval of the Thesis submission approval form by the Dean (Research) or nominee. Refer to the [Steps to submitting a thesis](#).

3.2.7

A candidate cannot withdraw from candidature or withdraw the thesis from examination once the thesis is submitted.

Thesis submission without endorsement

3.2.8

A candidate may apply to submit the thesis for examination without the endorsement of their principal supervisor, providing all other submission eligibility requirements set out in section 3.1.4 have been met.

3.2.9

The candidate will include a signed statement attached to the Thesis Submission Approval form, that acknowledges that the thesis has been submitted for examination without the endorsement of the principal supervisor.

3.2.10

This statement will not be communicated to the examiners during the examination process.

3.2.11

The Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School, as the approving authority for submission of the thesis without supervisor endorsement, will invite comment from involved parties but may not prevent a candidate from submitting the thesis for examination.

Early submission for examination

3.2.12

Where a candidate seeks to submit their thesis for examination earlier than the minimum candidature duration (as specified in the HDR Enrolment and Variations to Candidature Procedure and the Program and Courses website), the principal supervisor, if endorsing the submission, will be required to:

- Confirm on the Thesis Submission Approval form that the thesis will not benefit from further work; and
- Provide a justification supporting this confirmation.

Thesis submission under lapse of candidature regulations

3.2.13

Individuals may be readmitted to the HDR program for the purpose of thesis examination within three years of the date that their candidature was lapsed (refer to *the HDR Enrolment and Variations to Candidature Procedure* section 3.8).

3.2.14

Individuals must submit an Application to Submit Thesis under Lapse of Candidature Regulations form and meet the thesis submission eligibility requirements set out in section 3.1.4. Approval to submit the thesis under this arrangement may be subject to conditions, including a minimum period of enrolment.

3.2.15

Where candidature has been cancelled due to unpaid tuition fees, failure to re-enrol, or failure to meet other candidature requirements, approval for readmission for thesis submission as a lapsed candidate will not be granted.

3.3 Examination

Conduct of the examination

3.3.1

The examination period extends from the date of thesis submission to the date that the final examination outcome is determined by the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School.

3.3.2

The Griffith Graduate Research School will communicate with examiners as needed on behalf of Griffith University during the examination period.

3.3.3

Except for scheduled contact that may be required between candidate and examiners as part of an examination including an exhibition, performance or professional practice component, during the examination period:

- Supervisors and/or candidates must not knowingly communicate directly with an examiner about the research, the thesis or the process of examination;
- Examiners must not knowingly communicate about the research, the thesis or the process of examination with the supervisory team, candidate or other examiners;
- Examiners must not knowingly disclose the content of a thesis to an external party; and
- Examiners are able to ask for clarification regarding a query related to the thesis through the Griffith Graduate Research School.

3.3.4

Examiners will individually and independently assess the merit of a thesis and provide a report:

- In a form that specifies standards and criteria consistent with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 and Australian Qualifications Framework, including, for

doctoral degrees, that the thesis demonstrates a significant original contribution to knowledge;
and

- That includes a recommendation in accordance with section 3.3.5.

3.3.5

An examiner must recommend ONE of the following thesis outcome classifications:

- a) The candidate be awarded the degree without further changes;
- b) The candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions being completed;
- c) The candidate be permitted to submit a revised thesis for re-examination;
- d) The candidate be considered for the award of an alternate degree, where appropriate¹; or
- e) The thesis be failed and the candidate not be awarded the degree.

3.3.6

Examiners are requested to provide their reports within four weeks for a masters (research) examination or six weeks for a doctoral examination on receipt of the thesis submission.

3.3.7

The Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School may replace an examiner and/or annul their report where:

- The examiner fails to return a completed examination report within the requested time;
- There has been unauthorised contact between the examiner and the candidate or their supervisors during the examination;
- An unacceptable conflict of interested is identified during or after the examination; and/or
- The Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School determines that the examination has otherwise not been properly conducted.

3.3.8

Where a replacement examiner has been appointed, any report received from the examiner who has been replaced will not be considered.

3.3.9

In the event of an examiner or any other party raising concerns about the integrity of the research included in the thesis submission during the examination process, the matter will immediately be referred to the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School. The allegation will be investigated in accordance with the *Academic Misconduct Policy – HDR Candidates*.

Determining the outcome of the examination

3.3.10

The Chairperson of Examiners will consider the reports and recommendations made by all examiners and provide a recommendation to the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School, on the outcome of the examination.

¹ In the case of a candidate who has submitted a thesis for the degree of PhD or Professional Doctorate, the examiner may recommend the award of an appropriate Masters degree, subject to revisions as identified in the examiner's report.

3.3.11

The Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School will determine the examination outcome. The Dean may decide ONE of the following outcomes:

- a) The candidate be awarded the degree without further changes;
- b) The candidate be awarded the degree, subject to minor revisions to the satisfaction of either the principal supervisor or the Chairperson of Examiners;
- c) The candidate be permitted to submit a revised thesis for examination;
- d) The candidate be awarded an alternate degree, where appropriate; or
- e) The thesis be failed and the candidate not be awarded the degree.

3.3.12

Where the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School determines outcome 3.3.11 (e) – that the thesis be failed, the candidate will be deemed ineligible to graduate from the degree in which they were enrolled.

Reconciliation of examiners' reports

3.3.13

Where there is significant divergence between examiners' recommendations or the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School concludes that the examination result is undetermined, the Dean may decide not to provide one of the outcomes as set out in 3.3.11 and may instead approve:

- a) The appointment of an additional examiner; or
- b) The appointment of an adjudicator.

3.3.14

In the case of 3.3.13 (a), the additional examiner will examine the thesis independently, will not be given the reports of the other examiners, and will have the full set of recommendations available to them in assessing the thesis, in accordance with section 3.3.5.

3.3.15

In the case of 3.3.13 (b), the adjudicator will be provided with a copy of the thesis as submitted for the examination (or both versions in the case of a re-examination) and all examiners' reports. The adjudicator will not provide an additional examiner's report but will evaluate the existing examiners' reports and recommendations and make a recommendation to the Chairperson of Examiners as to the process or outcome of the examination.

Revision and re-examination

3.3.16

If the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School, determines that a candidate be permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis in accordance with section 3.3.11 (c) the candidate will be limited to one re-examination.

3.3.17

The candidate will submit:

- The full, revised thesis;
- A list of all revisions; and

- A statement indicating how the revised thesis responds to the points raised in the examiners' reports and justification where required for any proposed revisions the candidate has chosen not to make.

3.3.18

The revised thesis must be submitted by the deadline set by the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School, which will be no later than 12 months after the candidate is notified of the outcome of the first examination. Failure to re-submit or lodge a revised thesis by the date specified by the Dean may lead to a 'fail' outcome for the examination.

3.3.19

The thesis will be sent to the examiner/s who provided the recommendation for re-examination, or to replacement examiner/s where the original examiner/s is unable to act.

3.3.20

The original and any replacement examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis are provided with:

- The revised thesis;
- The candidate's list of all revisions and statement; and
- De-identified examiners' report/s, as appropriate, to determine if the required revisions have been made.

3.3.21

Each examiner will be required to individually and independently assess whether the candidate has adequately addressed the revisions to the thesis requested in the original examiner's report/s.

3.3.22

Examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis may provide ONE of the following recommendations:

- a) The candidate be awarded the degree without further changes;
- b) The candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor revisions being completed;
- c) The candidate be awarded an alternate degree, where appropriate; or
- d) The thesis be failed and the candidate not be awarded the degree.

Award of Excellence

3.3.23

The Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School, may approve the Award of Excellence in the Research Thesis on the basis of:

- The outcome of the examination being to award the degree without the requirement for revision; and
- The submission of the thesis for examination by the candidate's original maximum submission date.

3.3.24

The award will take the form of an annotation on the candidate's official academic transcript of 'Award of Excellence in the Research Thesis'. The candidate will receive a letter from the Dean, Griffith Graduate Research School, notifying them of the award.

Review of examination outcome

3.3.25

Insofar as the final outcome of an examination of an HDR thesis affects a candidate's eligibility to graduate, a candidate may request a review of the examination outcome in accordance with the requirements and timeframes set out in the *Student Review and Appeals Policy and Procedure* and on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularities in the conduct of the examination; and/or
- Documented evidence of prejudice or bias in the examination process.

3.3.26

A request for review by the candidate rejecting the academic assessment of the merit of their work is not permitted.

Submission of final thesis and completion of the degree

3.3.27

In addition to the eligibility requirements for the conferral of an award of the University set out in section 3.1.1 of the Graduations Procedure, an HDR candidate is required to submit the final electronic submission of the thesis and any supplementary materials (including a digital copy of creative works, where appropriate) along with the completed Depositing your Thesis Checklist Form to the Griffith Graduate Research School for lodgement with the University Library.

Research embargo

3.3.28

An automatic embargo (restriction of public access to the thesis) of one year from the date of conferral will be applied to all theses submitted to the University Library, except when this embargo is waived by the candidate.

3.3.29

At the point of thesis submission, a candidate may apply to further restrict access to the thesis beyond the automatic embargo period. The grounds on which a further period of restricted access may be granted typically are:

- a) The thesis contains material that must be kept confidential due to legal, cultural, ethical or national security reasons;
- b) The candidate is planning to publish their work in a format which requires some restriction on the availability of the thesis; and/or
- c) The candidate is involved in a formal agreement that requires that commercially or otherwise sensitive material will not be publicly disclosed. This includes patents and research produced under a funded contract.

3.3.30

The maximum duration granted for an embargo on the basis of 3.3.29 (b) will be no longer than two years (including the one year automatic embargo).

Aegrotat or posthumous conferral of an HDR degree

3.3.31

The circumstances in which the University may confer the award of an HDR degree posthumously or on the basis of permanent incapacitation, and the requirements that must be satisfied for this award, are set out in section 3.1.6 of the *Graduations Procedure*.

4.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this procedure, the following definitions apply:

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy for regulating qualifications in Australia. It prescribes the criteria for each qualification type.

AQF Level is the term used in the Australian Qualifications Framework (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.

Exegesis is a scholarly, critical commentary on the original creative work in dialogue with, and informing that original work or collection of works, resulting from research undertaken and produced during candidature. The exegesis also includes explicit reference to the research methodologies employed in the creation of the original creative work.

5.0 Information

Title	Higher Degree by Research Examination Procedure
Document number	2023/0000500
Purpose	This procedure supports the <i>Higher Degree by Research Policy</i> by detailing the requirements and procedures for the preparation, submission and examination of higher degree by research (HDR) theses at Griffith University.
Audience	Public
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Subcategory	Research
UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	This document aligns with Sustainable Development Goal/s: 4: Quality Education 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

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Policy advisor HDR Operations Team Leader (Progress and Completions), Griffith Graduate Research School

Approving authority Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

6.0 Related Policy Documents and Supporting Documents

Legislation [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018](#)
[Australian Qualifications Framework 2nd Edition 2013](#)
[Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)

Policy [Assessment Policy](#)
[Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
[Higher Degree by Research Policy](#)
[Student Review and Appeals Policy](#)
[Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#)

Procedure [Higher Degree by Research Enrolment and Variations to Candidature Procedure](#)
[Higher Degree by Research Academic Progress Procedure](#)
[Qualifications Procedure](#)
[Graduations Procedure](#)
[Student Review and Appeals Procedure](#)

Guideline [Appointment of HDR Examiners and Chairperson of Examiners Guidelines](#)
