

Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Submission and Examination - Procedures

1. Purpose of procedures

1.1 These procedures provide the structure for submission and examination of a higher degree by research thesis at the University.

2. Scope and application

2.1 These procedures apply to all Doctoral degrees and Research Master degrees. They apply to all candidates enrolled in a HDR program.

2.2 These procedures apply to all staff working in the HDR environment at the University.

2.3 These procedures, together with the Higher Degree by Research Candidature – Procedures and the Higher Degree by Research Supervision – Procedures support the Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy.

2.4 These procedures are supported by the following guidelines:

- Higher Degree by Research Candidature Progression – Guidelines
- Higher Degrees by Research Independent Academic Reviews – Guidelines
- Higher Degree by Research Thesis Format – Guidelines
- Higher Degree by Research Thesis Examination – Guidelines

3. Definitions

Refer to the university's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to these procedures and are critical to its effectiveness:

Candidate means a person admitted to a Higher Degree Research (HDR) program at the university.

Candidature means duration of enrolment in a higher degree by research program.

A Research student is considered to be a "candidate" for the higher degree by research program in which they are enrolled. All research and related work towards fulfilment of the requirements for a higher degree by research must be completed during enrolled candidature.

Creative work means an original product designed, created, or constructed by a candidate during candidature derived from one or more of the creative arts including graphical and new media techniques.

Exegesis means 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. The exegesis also includes explicit reference to the research methodologies employed in the creation of the original creative work.

Higher degree by research (HDR) means a supervised research program that requires original research in an area.

Principal Supervisor means a UniSC academic staff member who meets the criteria for and has been approved for registration as a UniSC Principal HDR supervisor. A registered principal supervisor may join an individual student's supervision panel as the student's principal supervisor or as a co-supervisor. Refer to the Higher Degree by Research Supervision – Procedures for a principal supervisor's roles and responsibilities.

Thesis means an original substantial piece of scholarly writing resulting from research undertaken by a candidate and produced during candidature to meet the requirements of the degree.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Dean, Graduate Research

FIRST APPROVED

29 July 2014

LAST AMENDED

20 February 2023

REVIEW DATE

18 February 2028

STATUS

Active

4. Thesis preparation

.1 For an award of a PhD or Research Masters, the thesis must fulfil the requirements of the program, as stated in the Higher Degree by Research – Academic Policy.

4.2 The candidate must prepare and format their thesis in accordance with ‘Higher Degree by Research Thesis Format – Guidelines’.

5. Thesis Review and Feedback

5.1 This section should be read in conjunction with the ‘Higher Degree by Research Independent Academic Reviews – Guidelines’.

5.2 The supervision panel provides feedback to students throughout candidature on the content and format of the thesis.

5.3 Prior to recommending approval of the submission of the thesis for external examination, the principal supervisor must arrange for:

(a) the thesis to be run through the university’s plagiarism detection software; and

(b) an independent academic review of the thesis prior to submission for external examination. Refer to the ‘Higher Degrees by Research Independent Academic Reviews – Guidelines’ for further information about the thesis review.

5.4 At thesis submission, the principal supervisor will be required to declare that the above requirements have been met.

6. Examiner Nomination

6.1 The Intention to Submit form lodged by the Candidate eight (8) weeks prior to the Thesis Submission will serve as a prompt for the principal supervisor to nominate Thesis Examiners.

6.2 Thesis Examiner nominations will include:

(a) the examiner nomination form; and

(b) a brief abstract of the thesis.

6.3 The principal supervisor will discuss potential Thesis Examiners with the Candidate so that any conflicts of interest can be dealt with. Refer to the HDR Thesis Examination - Guidelines for examples.

6.4 On submission of examiner nomination to the Dean, Graduate Research, the principal supervisor ceases communication with the nominated examiners. Subsequent communication relating to the examination is undertaken by the Graduate Research School.

6.5 An examination panel will consist of:

TABLE 0.1

Panel role	Number appointed	Description
Chairperson of the examination panel	An academic staff member of this university with appropriate expertise in the research area. Must not be or have been a member of the candidate’s supervision panel. The Chairperson does not have an examiner role.	
External examiners	2 to 3	Examiners hold a doctoral degree (or equivalent research experience) and must be an active researcher in the relevant discipline, as demonstrated by relevant and recent research publications. Examiners must not be members of the staff of this university (including adjunct appointments), nor have been a member of staff of this university within the past 5 years. A candidate’s supervisors must not be examiners. Any persons acknowledged in the thesis as contributing to the work may not be appointed as an examiner.

Reserve examiner(s)	At least 1	Meets the requirements of an external examiner as outlined above.
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6.6 Members of the examination panel are invited by the Graduate Research School on behalf of the Dean, Graduate Research. Invited examiners respond via the form provided.

6.7 When a thesis requires examination under obligations of confidentiality, the external examiners are required to sign and return a Confidentiality Agreement in addition to the examiner acceptance form provided.

6.8 The examination is a confidential process. Candidates are not advised of the identity of their appointed examiners until the end of the examination process, and only if the examiner has indicated that their identity may be made available. Members of the examination panel may not normally consult with one another. An examiner wishing to enter into dialogue with another examiner, should direct any questions to the Dean, Graduate Research via the Graduate Research School. An examiner may not communicate with the candidate or a member of their supervision panel.

7. Submission of thesis for examination

7.1 The following sections should be read in conjunction with the Higher Degree by Research Thesis Examination – Guidelines.

7.2 A candidate will submit their thesis for examination via UniSC's candidate management system.

7.3 The Graduate Research School will confirm the candidate has successfully completed all compulsory program requirements.

7.4 In the event that the principal supervisor declines to support the examination of the thesis or exegesis and creative work, the Dean, Graduate Research will determine whether the thesis or exegesis and creative work will be accepted for examination and if required, identify an appropriate examination panel. In making the determination, the Dean, Graduate Research may seek written or oral representations from the candidate, the supervisors and may seek information from any other sources.

7.5 If the Dean, Graduate Research, determines that the thesis or exegesis and creative work may not be submitted for examination, the Graduate Research School will advise the candidate in writing of the decision, the reasons for the decision and, where appropriate, any actions that the candidate needs to take in order that the thesis or exegesis and creative work may be made ready for examination.

7.6 Consumption of candidature is suspended when the thesis or exegesis (and creative work) is approved for submission, effective as of the date submitted. If the candidate has been in receipt of a scholarship, the Graduate Research School advises Student Finance to cease stipend payments.

8. Examination

8.1 When the thesis submission has been approved and when the approved Thesis Examiners have accepted the University's invitation to examine the thesis, the Graduate Research School will provide the examination materials to the Thesis Examiners.

8.2 Each examiner must submit to the Graduate Research School a concise written report on the thesis and must recommend one of the following:

TABLE 0.2

Possible outcomes		
(a)	Award	The thesis be accepted as satisfactory, and the candidate awarded the degree.
(b)	Award with revisions	The thesis be accepted as satisfactory and the candidate awarded the degree, subject to revisions as listed being made by the candidate to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of the examination panel.
(c)	Revise and resubmit for external examination	The thesis in its present form is not satisfactory and further work as described in the examiner's reports is required. The revised thesis should be subject to re-examination.
(d)	Non-Award	The thesis does not merit the award of the degree and does not demonstrate sufficient merit to warrant resubmission. The degree is not awarded.
(e)	[For doctoral examinations only]	The candidate may be offered the award of an appropriate alternative degree at the master level (with revisions as listed being made by the candidate to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of the examination panel).

8.3 Upon receipt of the examiner's reports, the Dean, Graduate Research determines the outcome of the examination as one of the options described in Section 8.2.

8.4 Where there is substantial disagreement between the external examiners, the Dean, Graduate Research, may seek input from the Chairperson of Examiners, or may request that an additional external examiner be appointed to examine the thesis.

8.4.1 If the Dean, Graduate Research determines an additional examination of the thesis, the Graduate Research School will invite the reserve examiner (in accordance with Section 6.4) who will examine the thesis and provide an additional report for the Dean, Graduate Research to consider.

8.4.2 In the case of referral to an additional external examiner, the Graduate Research School provides an update to the relevant principal supervisor to explain the delay to the final examination outcome.

8.5 The Graduate Research School communicates the final examination outcome advice to the Candidate, principal supervisor, and Chairperson of Examiners.

9. Additional requirements for HDR Creative Arts submission and examination

9.1 For candidates producing non-print creative work as part of a higher degree by research, additional submission requirements are described in this section. Such candidates are required to submit for examination, an activation/presentation event of their creative work, which includes but is not limited to one or more appropriate exhibitions, showcases, performances, industrial releases, or digital recordings (or recording of an activation and an exegesis).

9.2 A candidate must advise the Graduate Research School of the date of their final exhibition, showcase, performance, or industrial release and submit the relevant 'Notice of Intention to Submit Form', stipulating dates, times and locations of activation/s and programming, two months prior to the first activation date. In cases where there is to be more than one activation, candidates must include a listing of all activation dates.

9.3 Prior to the activations, candidates submit the 'Activation Approval Form' to the Graduate Research School, signed by their principal supervisor and the Head of enrolling unit or nominee. The nominee must be another appropriate senior academic staff member. This form demonstrates that the principal supervisor and the Head of enrolling unit or nominee agree that the creative work is ready for exhibition, showcase, industry release, performance, or other activation.

9.4 With respect to the activation of the creative work, the examiners are invited, but not required, to attend the activation.

9.5 The exegesis, activation recording(s) (where applicable) and digital copy of the creative work must be submitted within three months of the final activation.

9.6 The candidate is required to lodge:

- (a) a digital version of the examinable creative work/s and the exegesis for examination (or soft-bound copies where a digital version is not possible, one for each of the examiners nominated plus a university copy);
- (b) a recording of the activation of the creative work (where appropriate); and
- (c) a completed 'Higher Degree by Research Thesis Submission Form'.

9.7 Submission is to be made to the Graduate Research School by the agreed thesis completion date. Where the candidate has been given permission to submit their thesis in a form other than a printed volume, the candidate must comply with the directions of the Dean, Graduate Research regarding the material to be presented for examination.

9.8 At the conclusion of examination, prior to awarding of degree, candidates must submit final exegesis to the UniSC Research Bank in a manner and form to be prescribed by the Director, Library Services, and must provide the principal supervisor with a copy of the final exegesis. Candidates may apply for "restricted access" to ensure the exegesis is kept only for university records purposes and not to display the exegesis to the public. Applications for restricted access should be made in writing to the Dean, Graduate Research prior to the conclusion of the examination process.

10. Submission of a revised thesis for award

10.1 This section applies to Candidates who receive the outcome of B) – Award with revisions. The thesis will be accepted as satisfactory and the Candidate awarded the degree, submit to revisions as listed being addressed by the Candidate to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of the Examination Panel.

10.1.1 Refer to the Higher Degree by Research Thesis Examination – Guidelines for more detailed information on the process.

10.2 The Candidate, with advice from the supervisor panel, revises the thesis for re-submission. They may consult with the Chairperson of the Examination Panel prior to re-submission.

10.3 The revised thesis must be submitted within three (3) months (FTE) of advice of the examination outcome.

10.4 The Chairperson of the Examination Panel reviews the revised thesis.

10.4.1 In the event that the Chairperson is satisfied with the revised thesis they will recommend to the Dean, Graduate Research to accept the revised thesis for award.

10.4.2 In the event that the Chairperson is not satisfied with the revised thesis they will communicate with the Candidate and supervisory panel to request further revisions. This will continue until the Chairperson is satisfied with the revised thesis.

11. Submission of revised thesis for re-examination

11.1 This section applies to Candidates who receive the outcome of C) – Revise and Resubmit for External Examination. The thesis has not yet been accepted for award and the revised thesis will be assessed by external Thesis Examiners.

11.1.1 Refer to the Higher Degree by Research Examination – Guidelines for more detailed information on the process.

11.2 The Candidate, with advice from the supervisory panel, revises the thesis for re-submission.

11.3 The revised thesis must be submitted within six (6) months (FTE) from advice of the examination outcome.

11.4 A thesis sent for re-examination will be sent to the original examiners, providing they are willing to re-examine the thesis.

11.4.1 The Graduate Research School will contact the original examiners on behalf of the Dean, Graduate Research and invite them to re-examine the thesis. The invitation will be issued eight (8) weeks prior to the due date of the thesis submission.

11.5 The thesis examination process outlined in Section 7 is followed, with examination outcomes as per Section 8.2, with the exclusion of outcome (c), as a thesis can only be re-examined once.

TABLE 0.3

Possible outcomes

(a)	Award	The thesis be accepted as satisfactory, and the candidate awarded the degree.
(b)	Award with revisions	The thesis be accepted as satisfactory and the candidate awarded the degree, subject to revisions as listed being made by the candidate to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of the examination panel.
(d)	Non-Award	The thesis does not merit the award of the degree and does not demonstrate sufficient merit to warrant resubmission. The degree is not awarded.
(e)	[For doctoral examinations only]	The candidate may be offered the award of an appropriate alternative degree at the master's level (with revisions as listed being made by the candidate to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of the examination panel).
	Non-Award doctoral, award master	

12. Conferral of award

12.1 At the conclusion of examination, prior to award of the degree, candidates must:

(a) submit their final thesis to the UniSC Research Bank in a manner and form to be prescribed by the Director, Library Services, and must provide the principal supervisor with a copy of the final thesis;

(i) in the case of a thesis that includes published works or works that are subject to copyright or patent or similar intellectual property restrictions, the candidate must lodge with the thesis a copy of any contract or formal agreement or legal instrument that binds the candidate or the university with respect to those works;

(ii) the copy of the thesis lodged with the Library will be available to any person for consultation or copying unless, on the application of the candidate concerned, the Dean, Graduate Research, determines that it will not be made available without the written consent of the

author for a period which must not exceed 52 weeks or unless prohibited by any restrictions required by any legally enforceable instrument lodged by the candidate;

(b) return all University equipment to the relevant department (e.g., UniSC laptop and associated equipment to be returned to IT Services); and

(c) ensure all outstanding fees and charges have been resolved.

12.2 Candidature ends when the final thesis is successfully submitted to the UniSC Research Bank and all University equipment has been returned and any outstanding fees and charges have been resolved.

12.3 As per Academic Board's Terms of Reference, the Board is the approval authority to confer awards. The Graduate Research School seeks approval to confer the award via expedited executive action from the Chairperson of Academic Board as outlined in the Academic Board Standing Orders by submitting the 'Recommendation to Confer Award Form' to the Chairperson, Academic Board, via the Office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) with copies to Student Services and Engagement.

12.4 If approved, the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), on behalf of the Chairperson, Academic Board, notifies the Graduate Research School, Academic Secretariat and Student Services and Engagement. On receipt of the correspondence, Student Services and Engagement updates the student's academic record to indicate that the candidate has been awarded a Pass grade for their thesis, and the conferral is reported to Academic Board at its next meeting by the Academic Secretariat.

12.5 Student Services and Engagement prepares and sends a letter to the graduand officially informing them of the conferral of the award, inviting the graduand to participate in the next graduation ceremony, and, where appropriate, informing the graduand that they are entitled to use the title of Doctor.

12.6 Rescission of awards

12.6.1 In exceptional circumstances the University may rescind an award that has been conferred.

The circumstances include, but are not limited to, situations in which:

(a) an administrative error has resulted in the conferral of an award for which the student was not eligible; or

(b) the student is in breach of a policy of the University where rescission of an award is a valid penalty for such a breach.

12.6.2 The decision to rescind the conferral of an award is made by Council on the recommendation of the Chairperson of Academic Board.

13. Grievances

13.1 A candidate who has a grievance concerning any action or decision of a supervisor, or any other member of staff, and is unable to reach a satisfactory resolution through informal discussions and conciliation, may lodge a formal grievance under the Student Grievance Resolution – Governing Policy and associated procedures via the Student grievance resolution webpage.

Appendix 1

Managing Interests Matrix (Australian Council of Graduate Research Good Practice Guidelines – Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Authorship and Dissemination of Research Findings - Procedures
- Copyright - Academic Policy
- Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy
- Higher Degrees by Research Candidature - Procedures
- Higher Degrees by Research Supervision - Procedures
- Intellectual Property - Academic Policy
- Intellectual Property: Student IP - Procedures
- Managing and Investigating Breaches of Responsible Research Conduct - Procedures
- Research Data Management - Procedures
- Responsible Research Conduct - Academic Policy
- Student Conduct - Governing Policy
- USC University Research Centres and Research Institutes - Academic Policy
- USC University Research Centres and Research Institutes - Procedures

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- Higher Degrees by Research - Academic Policy

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

- Higher Degrees by Research - Procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)
- Australian Qualifications Framework