Doctor of Psychology Notes for Examiners

1. Matters pertaining to the DPsych degree are the responsibility of the Graduate Research Committee which reports to the University's Academic Board.

2. Monash’s DPsych program provides psychology graduates with advanced training in both research and the skills required for professional practice.

3. Final assessment of a candidate’s DPsych program comprises three components:
   - A coursework component, the units of which are completed satisfactorily before the thesis is submitted.
   - A supervised practical component. All practica are completed satisfactorily before the thesis is submitted.
   - A thesis of no more than 70,000 words.

4. While the standard of argument required in a DPsych thesis is of equal depth to a traditional PhD thesis, the DPsych thesis is shorter and therefore the scope of the DPsych research project and discussion is necessarily more limited. As with the PhD, DPsych candidates are required to create knowledge in an academically rigorous way with appropriate transparency in the framing and procedures of the work conducted, well-grounded argumentation and critical reflection.

5. Two examiners are invited to examine the thesis and to give clear advice on specific aspects of the thesis. Examiners are asked to tick the appropriate statement(s) on the accompanying report form. Recommendation 2(ii) should be made only when the examiner can specify amendments so precisely that the Head of Department’s decision is essentially a simple matter of fact. More detailed comments should be made in Section 4 of the report.

6. The thesis is forwarded to an examiner in confidence. An examiner is under an obligation to maintain confidentiality and in no circumstances should an examiner discuss the thesis with a third party without the prior approval of the Graduate Research Committee.

7. An examiner may request the University to obtain from the candidate clarification of specific points in the thesis. Such requests should be made through the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

8. The degree is awarded by the Graduate Research Committee following the successful completion of the three components of the DPsych program mentioned above namely, coursework units, practica and the thesis.

9. In cases where examiners deem it necessary to annotate a thesis, it should be done lightly in pencil or with Post-it stickers.
The Examination Process

The thesis is expected to provide a significant contribution to knowledge and/or practice in a field of professional psychology and to demonstrate the candidate’s capacity to undertake independent research. Examiners are asked to note that the award of this degree is based on the dissertation plus two other assessable components – the practica and coursework.

LENGTH OF THeses

The word length is expected to be between 60,000 and 70,000 words.

APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

It is required that two external examiners be nominated.

LENGTH OF EXAMINATION

On being invited to examine a thesis, examiners are given an initial deadline for reporting. Examiners are asked to complete their reports within eight weeks of receipt of the thesis.

Examiners are also requested to contact the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research if they anticipate a delay in submitting a report beyond the given deadline. If a report is not received within two weeks of the deadline indicated in the invitation letter, a reminder will be sent.

If the examiners are not unanimous in passing a thesis, further time may be spent for example, in adjudication by a third person or in seeking further responses from the candidate. In these circumstances candidates should not expect a rapid notification of the result.

CONTACT WITH EXAMINERS

Candidates under examination are instructed that they cannot contact the examiners directly during the examination process.

Supervisors are also cautioned not to contact the examiners with regard to a particular examination, except when advised by the committee to do so.

If an examiner wishes to seek clarification on aspects of the thesis before submitting his/her report, a request may be made through the examination officer of the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

OUTCOME OF THE THESIS EXAMINATION

Pass
The candidate and department are advised immediately of the pass result.

Minor amendments
Candidates and departments are advised if minor amendments are required.

Response to questions
If one or both of the examiners has asked for the candidate to respond to questions, these will be referred to the Graduate Research Committee representative of the relevant faculty. The representative will seek the advice of the supervisor and head of department to ascertain if the questions raised are appropriate and reasonable. In the majority of cases, the candidate will be advised to respond to the examiners via the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research office.
Other recommendations
Where there is a significant difference between the recommendations of the two examiners or where both examiners have recommended revision and resubmission of the thesis, then an advisory panel will be convened.

Candidates are issued with copies of the examiners’ reports upon the receipt of both reports. They are strongly advised to contact their supervisors to discuss the contents of the examiners’ reports.

ADVISORY PANELS FOR DOCTORAL EXAMINATIONS

Where there is a difference of substance between the recommendations of the thesis examiners, an advisory panel must be constituted to assist the committee in its assessment of the thesis.

An advisory panel consists of the convenor (i.e., the representative of the Faculty on the Committee), the head of department, the supervisor, and a fourth member who is not necessarily from the Faculty. Copies of the reports are made available to members of the panel and also to the candidate.

In special circumstances, it may seem appropriate for a panel to contact one or both examiners. If so, the panel may first seek comment on the relevant issues from the candidate by way of clarification for transmission to the examiner. All contact with examiners and the candidate is through the Examinations Unit of the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

As Monash University does not reveal the names of examiners to each other at any stage during the examination process, a panel cannot recommend that examiners be asked to consult each other about a thesis under examination.

The Graduate Research Committee may accept, vary, or reject the report of an advisory panel.

An advisory panel may recommend:

- pass
- pass (with minor amendments, either to examiner(s) or head’s satisfaction)
- fail
- revise and resubmit
- appointment of an adjudicator. (This should be the normal recommendation where there is a substantial disagreement between examiners).

Fail
A fail recommendation will normally arise only where both initial examiners have recommended fail or where one examiner recommends fail and the other recommends revise and resubmit and the adjudicator subsequently submits a fail report.

There should be no presumption that a fail result is to be avoided at all costs. The thesis must in the opinion of the examiners make a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the relevant field of study and demonstrate the capacity of the candidate to carry out independent research. If the examiners do not think a thesis meets these requirements, it fails.

Revision and resubmission
Advisory panel members should differentiate quite unequivocally between revise and resubmit on the one hand and minor or substantial amendments on the other. In the case of the latter, the candidate is not required to re-enrol but to undertake amendments to the satisfaction of the head of department and/or dissenting examiner.

Where the candidate is required to revise and resubmit he/she is required to re-enrol.
Committee policy on the examination of revised and resubmitted theses:

(a) Where a candidate has been required to revise and resubmit a thesis subsequent to the receipt of an adjudicator’s report, the resubmitted thesis shall normally be examined by two examiners who shall be appointed in the usual way on the recommendation of the relevant head of department. As the revised thesis is deemed to be a new thesis, one of the examiners so nominated may be an original assenting examiner. Only in the most exceptional circumstances, or circumstances described in (b) following, will the Committee approve the appointment of only one examiner to review the resubmitted thesis.

(b) Where a candidate has been required to revise and resubmit a thesis on the basis of one dissenting report only and without the involvement of an adjudicator, the relevant advisory panel may recommend the appointment of only one examiner.

(c) The examiner(s) recommended for appointment in accordance with (a) and (b) preceding shall normally include the dissenting examiner(s) or, if appropriate, the adjudicator. Examiners will be given the full range of recommendation options, regardless of whether they are an original or a new examiner. The original assenting examiner will be notified that the candidate has been advised to revise and resubmit the thesis, following endorsement of the adjudicator’s recommendation by the advisory panel and the Graduate Research Steering Committee.

Appointment of adjudicator
A panel may resolve to recommend the appointment of an adjudicator.

Consequently, it is considered appropriate that where a thesis is to be submitted for adjudication, the candidate is invited to submit a written defence of the thesis in response to the criticisms and comments of the dissenting examiner. The candidate’s defence will then be sent to the adjudicator together with the thesis and the examiners’ reports.

Both the candidate and the examiners are informed that an adjudicator has been appointed and the candidate is informed of the adjudicator’s name under the same conditions of confidentiality as apply to the appointment of examiners. However, the identity of the original examiners and the adjudicator are not revealed to each other.

The Committee considers an appropriate order in which an adjudicator might proceed with the task is first to read the thesis, next assess the examination reports and finally consider the candidate’s thesis defence.

An adjudicator is not an additional examiner, but a judge requested to pronounce on the relative soundness, correctness and appropriateness of the initial two examiners’ recommendations. To this end the adjudicator should offer an opinion on whether the examiners were competent and fair.

For example, the adjudicator should assess whether:

- the examiners have fully grasped the substance of the candidate’s thesis;
- they have erred in their judgement of the thesis;
- the examiners have reviewed the thesis at a level appropriate to that of a doctoral candidate.

An adjudicator is asked to provide reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with examiners. It should be reiterated that in making an assessment on the appropriateness of the two examiners’ reports, the adjudicator is not being asked to set additional requirements for the candidate.

The adjudicator’s report is referred to the advisory panel for a subsequent recommendation.
AWARD OF DEGREE

The Graduate Research Committee must ultimately determine whether a candidate has satisfactorily completed the requirements for the degree after considering:

- the results of any coursework subjects;
- the results of the practica;
- the results of the thesis examination.

Further information

A more detailed explanation of thesis and examination matters is available on the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research examinations page:


The Monash University Doctorate Regulations are available in chapter 12 of the Handbook: