

# GRADUATE RESEARCH THESIS EXAMINATION PROCEDURE

This procedure is in effect from 30 April 2024. Prior to 30 April 2024, refer to [Graduate Research Thesis Examination Procedure v2.2](#).

## SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Monash University graduate research courses.

For the purpose of this procedure:

- references to 'the University' include activities of Monash University Australia, Monash University Malaysia, Monash University Indonesia, Monash Suzhou, and the Monash Suzhou Research Institute, unless indicated otherwise; and
- references to 'graduate research students' and 'students' have the same meaning unless specified otherwise.

## PROCEDURE STATEMENT

A thesis examination is conducted to determine a graduate research student's ability to produce a body of work that demonstrates systematic and critical understanding of a complex field of learning and specialised research skills for the advancement of learning and/or for professional practice. This procedure outlines the processes for submitting and examining a thesis to meet, in part or in full, the requirements of a graduate research degree, along with the process for determining an examination outcome.

### 1. Preparation of a thesis

#### Eligibility to submit a thesis for examination

- 1.1 In order to be eligible to submit a thesis for examination, a student:
  - 1.1.1 must be currently enrolled and not encumbered;
  - 1.1.2 have completed all course requirements;
  - 1.1.3 have satisfactorily completed all milestones as required under the [Graduate Research Progress Management Procedure](#); and
  - 1.1.4 submitted any outstanding forms relating to their enrolment, such as Return to Study forms.
- 1.2 A student who is subject to a discipline proceeding as defined under Part 7 of the [Monash University \(Council\) Regulations](#) or an unsatisfactory progress proceeding as defined under Part 6 of the [Monash University \(Academic Board\) Regulations](#) is not eligible to submit a thesis.

#### Thesis content

- 1.3 All research included in a thesis must be conducted during the enrolment period unless prior written approval has been provided by the Graduate Research Committee (GRC).
- 1.4 The layout of the thesis and selection of the title is to be determined by the student in consultation with the supervisory team to ensure the submission meets the standard for thesis examination.
- 1.5 Students must refer to the course requirements outlined in the University Handbook if alternative research output(s) are required to be submitted in lieu or in addition to a thesis.
- 1.6 Students must complete all relevant sections of the thesis [preliminary pages template](#) and incorporate the relevant preliminary pages into their thesis submission.
- 1.7 A thesis will only be accepted for examination where all content requirements under this section are met.

## Research Integrity

- 1.8 The thesis must:
  - 1.8.1 state the sources of the information and the extent to which the thesis draws on the works of others in the preface and bibliography, and utilise citation methods appropriate to the discipline. Full and appropriate attribution must be made in accordance with the University's [Research Authorship and Attribution Policy](#) and [Responsible Conduct of Research Policy](#);
  - 1.8.2 comply with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research statements on ethics and integrity in research and all other national codes on responsible conduct of research (as applicable). This must also be complied with for any alternative research outputs. Students will be asked to confirm that their thesis and the research contained therein complies with the University's academic and research integrity and intellectual property policies; and
  - 1.8.3 not have been (or intended to be) submitted for another award course, unless there is prior written approval from the GRC.
- 1.9 Students should ensure they have secured all necessary copyright and/or intellectual property related permissions (where applicable) before thesis submission. Students should refer to the [Guidelines on Graduate Research Student Intellectual Property](#) for more information.
- 1.10 When generative artificial intelligence tools are used by students as part of their research, or thesis preparation, they are expected to be used with honesty and in a manner that is responsible and ethical and it must always be acknowledged.
  - 1.10.1 Where University policy does not permit the use of generative artificial intelligence tools they cannot be used.
  - 1.10.2 The University will provide staff and students with resources to guide their understanding and use of generative artificial intelligence tools.

## Length of thesis and additional requirements

- 1.11 The word count for a thesis excludes footnotes, references, appendices, equations, tables, diagrams or other illustrations.
- 1.12 Students must adhere to the maximum word limit specified in the University Handbook, unless otherwise approved by the GRC. Any additional course-specific requirements will be specified in the University Handbook.
  - 1.12.1 Where footnotes are included within the body of the thesis, as required by some disciplinary and citation conventions, students should ensure that they are not excessive, and clearly support the argument of the thesis, for example, by verifying evidence.

## Thesis including Published Works

- 1.13 Where a student is intending to present a thesis for examination which includes works published by the student, they must confirm requirements with their faculty and refer to the University website on thesis including published works [here](#).
- 1.14 Students must only include published works in their thesis which have been researched and written during their enrolment.
- 1.15 When published papers are submitted in support of a thesis, they should be included in the thesis as appendices.

## Thesis language

- 1.16 As a general principle, a thesis must be written and examined in English.
- 1.17 The GRC (or delegate) may consider and permit submission in alternative languages where the intrinsic nature of the research requires expression in a foreign language, for example, where translation into English could not be undertaken without the loss of the nuances of the original language. In such circumstances, a substantial 10,000 words synopsis in English must be submitted along with the thesis.
- 1.18 Additional thesis language requirements for joint award courses are specified in the University Handbook where applicable.

## Editing assistance from third parties

- 1.19 Where a thesis is to have input from a professional editor, the student must obtain prior written permission from their main supervisor. Professional editorial assistance should be restricted to matters of language, illustrations, completeness and consistency. Where a professional editor provides advice on matters of structure, only exemplars should be given.
- 1.20 The name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered must be included in the acknowledgements as outlined in the preliminary pages template.

## 2. Thesis submission and nomination of examiners

### Thesis Submission

- 2.1 Students must submit an electronic copy of the thesis for examination via the Thesis Examination Portal and complete all declarations within the submission form.

- 2.2 The student must use the name under which they are formally enrolled at the University on the thesis and all documentation.
- 2.3 Students may also be required to submit soft thermal-bound copies of their thesis where requested by an examiner for the purpose of their assessment.
- 2.4 The Thesis Submission Date recorded in the student management system will be the date that all thesis submission requirements have been deemed to be met.

### Examiner eligibility criteria

- 2.5 All examiners must be external to the University and must:
- be of appropriate standing in the relevant field of study;
  - hold a qualification equal to the level of the award they are examining or have equivalent experience and expertise;
  - have previous experience as a supervisor or examiner at the Australian Qualifications Framework level at which they will examine;
  - be from different institutions; and
  - be free from any form of conflict of interest with the student or their supervisors.
- 2.6 A person is ineligible to be appointed an examiner where they have:
- 2.6.1 a pending appointment with, or are currently employed by, the University, in accordance with the [Examiner Conflict of Interest Guidelines](#); and/or
- 2.6.2 held a staff or adjunct appointment with the University in the last five years (equivalent full-time), or where they are a current employee of an affiliated institution of the University.
- 2.7 To ensure independence of the examination process, an examiner will not be approved where there is an actual or perceived serious conflict of interest with the student, a supervisor, the University, the subject matter or another examiner. The Chair of Examiners (CoE) is to refer to the [Examiner Conflict of Interest Guidelines](#) for the nomination of graduate research thesis examiners for further information.
- 2.7.1 Where there is doubt regarding the potential suitability of an examiner in relation to conflict of interest, the CoE should contact the MGRO thesis examinations team ([mgro-thesisexams@monash.edu](mailto:mgro-thesisexams@monash.edu)) for an assessment to be made by the Deputy Chair of GRC (or delegate) prior to submitting their nomination of examiners.

### Examiner Appointment

- 2.8 The main supervisor must nominate two examiners, who they have informally approached (see the examiner invitation template) and who comply with the requirements under this procedure.
- 2.8.1 Students are entitled to participate in informal discussions regarding the prospective examiners.
- 2.8.2 Supervisors should ensure that students are consulted in light of any known conflict of interest with the prospective examiners under consideration.
- 2.9 The nomination of examiners must be endorsed by the CoE before they can be appointed by the GRC.
- 2.10 The independence of nominated and approved examiners is fundamental, and must be a material consideration during the selection process. Examiners must not be selected from the same institution.

### Replacement examiner

- 2.11 The GRC may excuse an examiner and/or annul their report where:
- 2.11.1 the examiner fails to return a completed examination report by the due date following all reasonable attempts to elicit the report;
- 2.11.2 the student and/or supervisor has/have made unauthorised contact with the examiner during the examination;
- 2.11.3 the examiner has made unauthorised contact with the student and/or their supervisors during the examination;
- 2.11.4 an undisclosed and unacceptable conflict of interest is identified during or after the examination; and/or
- 2.11.5 the GRC determines that the examination has otherwise not been properly conducted.
- 2.12 Where an examiner is excused and/or their report annulled, a replacement examiner must be appointed in accordance with clauses 2.8 to 2.10.

### Thesis dispatch and student notification

- 2.13 The CoE must review and confirm that all thesis submission requirements outlined in this procedure have been met and the thesis is ready for dispatch to the examiners.

- 2.14 Students will receive an email notification at the time of thesis dispatch.

#### Duration of examination

- 2.15 Examiners should complete their reports within eight weeks from the date of thesis dispatch for doctoral theses and six weeks for research master's. Where an extension is required, examiners must contact the Monash Graduate Research Office (MGRO) for advice.
- 2.16 Reminders will be sent to examiners when reports are due and overdue examiner reports will be managed in consultation with the CoE and the main supervisor. A replacement examiner may be appointed in accordance with clauses 2.11 and 2.12 of this procedure.

#### Contact with examiners

- 2.17 Students and supervisors must not make direct contact with examiners during the examination process.
- 2.18 Any correspondence with the examiners must be made through MGRO and with prior discussion with the CoE.

### 3. Examination of theses

#### Doctoral theses

- 3.1 Examiners should assess whether the thesis submitted by a doctoral student has met the criteria outlined in clause 3.2 and recommend an assessment outcome outlined in Table 1 through provision of a written report.
- 3.2 In assessing a doctoral thesis, examiners must consider whether the student:
- 3.2.1 makes an original and substantial contribution to the discipline or area of professional practice;
  - 3.2.2 is able to critically reflect on, and engage with, complex ideas to create new knowledge and understanding; and
  - 3.2.3 has presented a thesis which, in format and presentation, is appropriate to the standard expected of the degree.
- 3.3 Assessment Outcomes are detailed below in Table 1.

#### Research master's theses

- 3.4 Examiners should assess whether the student has met the criteria outlined at clause 3.5 below and to recommend an assessment outcome outlined in Table 1 through provision of a written report. A numerical mark and grade as set out in Table 2 must also be provided for degrees with such examination requirements.
- 3.5 In assessing a research master's thesis, examiners must consider whether the student:
- 3.5.1 makes a contribution to knowledge and understanding of the discipline or area of professional practice;
  - 3.5.2 demonstrates a thorough understanding of the subject matter with which it deals; and;
  - 3.5.3 has presented a thesis which, in format and presentation, is appropriate to the standard expected of the degree and contains a coherent and sustained argument.

**Table 1 - Doctoral and Research Master's Thesis Assessment Outcomes**

Outcome	Detailed descriptions
<b>Pass</b>	The student can be awarded the degree without further amendments or examination.
<b>Pass, with editorial corrections required</b>	The student can be awarded the degree, subject to editorial corrections in the thesis (e.g. typos, grammatical errors) within one to two months, as specified by the examiners in their written reports and certified by the CoE.
<b>Pass, with minor edits required</b>	The student can be awarded the degree, subject to minor edits in the thesis within one to two months, as specified by the examiners in their written reports and certified by the CoE.
<b>Pass, with major amendments required</b>	The student can be awarded the degree, subject to major amendments in the thesis as specified by the examiners in their written reports. The amendments should be completed within three to six months from receipt of assessment outcome and certified by the CoE.
<b>Revise and Resubmit</b>	The thesis requires major revision and re-examination, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revisions ranging from extensive reformatting or restructuring of the thesis to conducting further research, analysis and clarification or re-analysis of results.</li></ul>

Outcome	Detailed descriptions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student is required to re-enrol for a period of up to twelve months, as specified by the CoE in setting the resubmission due date.</li> <li>Re-examination of the thesis should be conducted in accordance with section 3.</li> </ul> <p>Failure to resubmit a thesis that addresses all revision requirements and meets the requirements for examination by the resubmission due date will result in an assessment outcome of 'Fail'. Note: the 'Revise and Resubmit' is not available as an assessment outcome for the second examination.</p>
Fail	The student should not be awarded the degree or be permitted to resubmit any revision.

**Table 2 - Research Master's Examination Numerical Grading Schema**

Grade	Detailed descriptions
<b><u>H1: 80 - 100%</u></b>	A mark in this range indicates exceptional work that stands out for its combination of independent thought with critical arguments and its depth and scope of knowledge. The student's work satisfies the high standards of presentation, organisation and articulation of material expected of the top 25% of research master's theses. The thesis indicates a distinctive approach or project, and at the upper end of the range it makes a significant and original contribution to debate. If the work is of sufficient originality or quality to warrant publication in a refereed journal, then it should receive a mark in this range, although this is not a necessary requirement for an H1 grade.
<b><u>H2A: 70 - 79%</u></b>	A mark in this range indicates a comprehensive understanding of the relevant debates, texts, and arguments, and extensive knowledge enabling appropriate contextualisation of the material. The work displays high standards of scholarship and presentation and is well structured. It exhibits convincing, well-articulated arguments and maintains a sustained critical engagement with the subject matter with an element of originality. A mark in the top section of the range manifests the appearance of an original approach or project. The student is likely to be capable of completing a doctoral program.
<b><u>H2B: 60 - 69%</u></b>	<p>A mark in this range indicates a reasonable understanding of the relevant material, and an adequate level of competency in articulation and argumentation. Its scholarly presentation is fair, yet, the work presents one or more of the following deficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is overly descriptive and lacks evidence of sustained critical thinking, rendering it barely satisfactory as a piece of postgraduate work;</li> <li>Its focus lacks breadth and the range of primary and/or secondary text references is too narrow; and/or</li> <li>An insufficiency in the presentation and organisation of material, or the argumentative expression, causes a substantial compromise to the work's overall quality and consistency.</li> </ul> <p>This student would not be encouraged to progress to a doctoral program.</p>
<b><u>0 - 59%</u></b>	This work is unsatisfactory at postgraduate level. It fails to produce a coherent argument and does not engage in critical thinking to any significant degree. It demonstrates serious deficiencies in both knowledge and understanding of the field, and its expression of information and argument is unclear, weak and incoherent.
<p><b>*Note:</b> Where an examiner or examiners recommend the thesis be passed or passed subject to amendments, the mark they recommend must be 60% or above.</p>	

## Oral examination

- 3.6 Where a course has been approved to include an oral examination (public defense or viva voce) all students enrolled in the course will be required to undertake this as part of their examination process in a manner determined by the GRC.
- 3.7 Where a student is required to undergo an oral defence examination as part of the course requirements of a joint award, they must liaise with their relevant academic unit at least three months prior to submitting their thesis to commence arrangements for the examination.
- 3.7.1 Where Monash is the student's home university, the CoE must organise the oral examination.
- 3.7.2 Where Monash is the host university, the CoE must liaise with their counterpart at the partner university to ensure the oral examination is properly organised.

## 4. Examination Outcomes

### Thesis Examination Outcome

- 4.1 For a thesis examination outcome to be confirmed, two valid examiners reports are required.
- 4.2 Copies of examiner reports will be provided to the CoE. The CoE will review both examiners' reports and, where required, consult the student's main supervisor in finalising an examination outcome.
- 4.3 The examiners' reports will be released to the student and supervisors following the CoE's review.
- 4.4 Where one or more of the examiners have requested amendments or revisions, the student will be required to complete the revisions or amendments as outlined.
- 4.5 Where one or more of the examiners have indicated a 'Revise and Resubmit', a period of re-enrolment of no more than twelve months may be required. The student will be advised of the requirements for re-enrolment and re-submission for examination.
- 4.6 Where there is a significant difference in the assessment outcomes provided by the two examiners there may be a requirement for adjudication. This will be the case for:
  - 4.6.1 Doctoral examinations where only one examiner indicated a thesis assessment outcome of 'Fail'.
  - 4.6.2 Research master's examinations where one examiner indicated a thesis assessment outcome of 'Fail' and/or where a numerical grading between examiners differs by 15 marks or more.
- 4.7 Where adjudication is required, the CoE should consult with the supervisors and nominate an appropriate adjudicator.
  - 4.7.1 The adjudicator must meet the same eligibility criteria as an examiner; and
  - 4.7.2 Appointment of an adjudicator must follow the same provisions as the appointment of examiners.
- 4.8 An adjudicator must assess and determine which examiner's report more accurately reflects the assessment against the criteria in clause 3.2 (for doctoral theses) and clause 3.5 (for research master's theses) to thus be adopted as the examination outcome.
- 4.9 When a student receives an outcome other than 'Pass'/'Fail', the student must make the required edits and/or amendments, and submit a document listing the edits and amendments made in response to the examiners' reports. Failure to do so within the required timeframe may result in a final examination outcome of 'Fail'.
- 4.10 Upon receipt of documents submitted by the student, the CoE must review the examiners' reports, the list of edits and amendments, and the amended thesis prior to finalising the examination outcome. In the case of 'Revise and Resubmit', the CoE must confirm that the resubmission meets the requirements for thesis examination, before the resubmitted thesis is dispatched for the second examination in accordance with section 3 of this procedure. The outcome of the second examination is final.

### Oral Examination Outcome

- 4.11 Following any required oral examination (public defense or viva voce), the CoE must advise MGRO in writing whether the student has satisfactorily met the oral examination requirements.
- 4.12 In the circumstances where the oral examination requirements are not met, the GRC (or delegate) should review and make a determination on the examination outcome. Before making a determination, the GRC (or delegate) may seek further information from the CoE and/or request an oral examination to be re-conducted where appropriate.

### Course Completion

- 4.13 When written confirmation is received that all course and examination requirements have been met, students will be recommended to the GRC for award of degree as per section 7 of the [Graduate Research Candidature Management Policy](#).

## DEFINITIONS

Academic Unit	As defined by the Monash University (Academic Board) Regulations, includes a sub-faculty, school, department, centre, institute or other unit into which a faculty is divided; or a school, department, centre or institute established as a separate entity from a faculty. Typically, is the organisational unit in which the student is enrolled.
Adjudicator	An experienced examiner whose role is to review the reports and examinable material and make a determination as to which report best reflects the quality of the thesis and presents the most appropriate examination outcome recommendation. The appointment of an adjudicator follows the same COI and approval process as for an examiner or replacement examiner.
Student	A person who:

	<p>a) is admitted to a course of study at the University;</p> <p>b) is enrolled at the University in a non-award study or one or more units of study on an assessed or non-assessed basis and without admission to a course of study;</p> <p>c) is pursuing a course of study or unit of study at the University through an exchange or study program or other arrangement between the University and another educational institution;</p> <p>d) is engaged in a student mobility program involving the University, whether or not the program is credited towards a course of study or unit of study;</p> <p>e) has completed a course of study but on or to whom the relevant degree or award has not been conferred or awarded;</p> <p>f) has deferred, or has intermitted, or has been suspended from, a course of study;</p> <p>g) is enrolled in a course of study or one or more units of study offered by the University through another educational institution; or</p> <p>h) has consented in writing to be bound as a student by the University statute and University regulations.</p>
Thesis	Means a written thesis or approved alternative research component as specified in the course Handbook.

## GOVERNANCE

Parent policy	<a href="#">Graduate Research Candidature Management Policy</a>
Supporting procedures	<a href="#">Graduate Research Internship Procedure</a> <a href="#">Graduate Research Progress Management Procedure</a>
Supporting schedules	N/A
Associated procedures	<a href="#">Graduate Research Admissions Procedure</a> <a href="#">Graduate Research Enrolment Procedure</a> <a href="#">Grading Schema Procedure</a>
Related legislation	<a href="#">Australian Qualifications Framework</a> <a href="#">Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)</a> <a href="#">Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007</a>
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