Policy Document Administrator	Edwina Murphy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Policy Document Approver	Research Committee
Responsible Body/Person	Research Committee
Next Review date	July 2028
Superseded documents	None
Related documents	Academic Governance Charter Conferral Policy *HDR Examination and Ranking Form* HDR Examination Policy HDR Thesis Submission and Final Bound Copy Rules *Notice of Intention to Submit* *Thesis Repository Form*
Related HE Standards	1.4, 1.5, 4.2, 7.2.2.d
Related National Code Standards	N/A

1. PURPOSE

To set out the procedure for **Higher Degree by Research (HDR)** thesis examinations and conferrals.

2. DEFINITIONS

Definitions for any words in **Bold** in this document can be found in the Policy Glossary. The first instance of each defined term has been outlined in bold.

3. STEPS

STEP 1. PRIOR TO SUBMITTING A THESIS

Candidates and their principal supervisor complete and sign a *Notice of Intention to Submit* and submit it to their supervising college's **Postgraduate/Research Coordinator**, who will forward the form to the **AUT**.

The form should be lodged at least three months prior to the expected date of submission of the thesis for examination. This allows the AUT office time to make the necessary arrangements for the examination of the thesis including the appointment of examiners.

An abstract of no more than 300 words and a 50–200 word statement on how the research contributes to the mission of the church must accompany the *Notice of Intention to Submit*.

STEP 2. EXAMINERS

It is the responsibility of the supervisor and candidate to nominate potential examiners in accordance with the HDR Examination Policy, noting any possible conflicts of interest, and providing a list of recent publications. While supervisors may informally approach potential examiners to ask if they would be interested in examining a thesis, supervisors and candidates must not contact examiners from the time the *Notice of Intention to Submit* has been submitted until the conclusion of the examination

process. If they happen to meet (at a conference, for example), the thesis must not be discussed.

Examiners will receive a PDF unless they specifically request a soft bound hard copy. Candidates will be informed if a soft bound copy is required.

STEP 3. SUBMITTING THE THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

The thesis must be formatted and presented in accordance with the HDR Thesis Submission and Final Bound Copy Rules, including the certifications.

STEP 4. SUBMISSION PANEL (MANDATORY FROM 1 JANUARY 2028)

A presentation based on the final version of the thesis will be made to a Submission Panel comprised of the Postgraduate/Research Coordinator, supervisors, an [AUT] external, and other interested academic staff. The purpose is to confirm that the thesis is the candidate's own work with appropriate use and referencing of AI, if relevant.

The submission panel will be in two parts: one open to other HDR candidates and interested people, and the second part restricted to the candidate and the submission panel. The submission panel may also consult separately without the candidate, if necessary. Candidates should expect to be asked questions about their process and their use of AI, as well as the content of their thesis. Any concerns about the integrity of the thesis must be resolved before the thesis is sent to examiners.

STEP 5. HDR ADMINISTRATION

Once the thesis has been lodged for examination (after the Submission Panel), the candidate's enrolment status will be updated to Thesis Under Assessment (TUA) and the thesis will be sent to the examiners. The average time taken for the examination process outlined below, from thesis submission to conferral of the award, is around 6 months—it may be shorter or longer, depending on circumstances.

STEP 6. THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

Role of the Examiners

Examiners are appointed in accordance with the HDR Examination Policy. They sign a letter of appointment and once the thesis is submitted, they receive it along with an *HDR Examination and Ranking Form.* They are requested to submit their report within 8 weeks of receiving the work for examination, although there are often delays at this stage of the process. Any concerns about the integrity of the thesis which emerge during the examination process will be dealt with in accordance with the Research Misconduct Procedure.

Examiners will be asked to select one of the following outcomes:

1) **Award**

Definition: The thesis meets all required standards in terms of the nature and quality of work undertaken, and the degree can be awarded without any further work by the candidate, other than the correction of typographical errors and small lapses of expression and presentation in the final copy.

2) **Award (after corrections)**

Definition: The thesis meets all required standards in terms of the nature and quality of work undertaken, and the degree can be awarded without further examination once the candidate has made a number of corrections and clarifications in the thesis. Normally, these would be completed within three months, and re-enrolment would not be required. In the case of more extensive corrections, re-enrolment may be required.

3) **Revision and re-examination**

Definition: The thesis does not yet meet all required standards for the award of the degree and the candidate should complete a further period of research and writing. Normally, a candidate would re-enrol for a period of up to one year full-time (or equivalent). The thesis would then submitted for re-examination.

4) **Not award**

Definition: The thesis does not meet the required standards for the award of the degree and does not warrant a further period of research and writing.

Role of the Supervisor

Examiners' reports are submitted to the Principal Supervisor who then, in consultation with the candidate, submits a response to the **Higher Degree by Research Examination Panel (HDREP)** via the Research Manager. The Principal Supervisor's response should include, where relevant, a detailed list of proposed revisions.

Role of the Higher Degree by Research Examination Panel (HDREP)

The Higher Degree by Research Examination Panel considers the examiners' reports and the Principal Supervisor's response and submits a report to Research Committee. The report includes a table summarising each examiner's recommendation, ranking of the thesis, and experience, the Principal Supervisor's response, and HDREP's recommendation to Research Committee.

Role of the Research Committee

Research Committee considers the recommendation of HDREP.

Where the decision of Research Committee is **award** or **award (after corrections)**, the candidate, Principal Supervisor and Postgraduate/Research Coordinator will be advised of the necessary corrections (if any) as detailed in Step 5.

Where the decision of Research Committee is **revision and re-examination:**

- All submissions for re-examination must be accompanied by a list of the corrections and amendments completed by the candidate.
- A Submission Panel will be conducted (after 1 January 2028)
- Normally the same examiners will be asked to re-examine the thesis. Examiners will be asked if they are prepared to re-examine the thesis if that is their recommendation.
- Only one resubmission for re-examination will be allowed.

Where the decision of Research Committee is **not award**, Research Committee may recommend the award of a lesser degree.

Additional prerogatives of Research Committee

- Before reaching a final decision, Research Committee may send the reports of each examiner to the other examiners and invite their comments.
- In instances of doubt or conflict among examiners, Research Committee may seek the views of an additional examiner.
- Research Committee may require the candidate to undergo an oral examination.

STEP 7. CORRECTIONS AND FINAL SUBMISSION

Once Research Committee has made a decision, a letter will be sent to the candidate, Principal Supervisor, and Postgraduate/Research Coordinator of the affiliated college. This letter will provide details on the outcome of the examination process and the next steps, which will vary according to the outcome.

A marked-up version of the corrected thesis, accompanied by a list of the corrections and amendments completed, must be submitted to the Research Department with the endorsement of the Principal Supervisor. Once these have been verified by the Research Department on behalf of Research Committee, candidates will be notified. Candidates then submit their final clean PDF version, the *Thesis Repository Form,* and provide a citation to be approved by the Research Department. They may then arrange for the hardbound copies of the thesis to be produced.

Citation Guidelines

Citations read out at Graduation Ceremonies should present the research in a positive and meaningful way.

1. Citations should be no more than **150 words** in length, taking approximately 1 minute to deliver.
2. The citation should begin with the candidate's name, followed by the title of the award; the title of the thesis, and the names of the principal supervisor and co-supervisor(s).
3. The **first two sentences of the main text** should convey the research problem/issue and the outcome/impact of the study. The remaining words may elaborate the research method used and/or expand on key research findings.
4. The citation should be written in **plain English** so that it is able to be understood by a person who has no specialised knowledge of the area of the research.

5. Where the thesis has been written in a language other than English, the citation should be in both the LOTE language and an English translation.

STEP 8. CONFERRAL

Role of Academic Board

A recommendation will only be made to Academic Board to confer a degree once the final PDF version has been approved by the Research Department. The date of conferral is the date on which Academic Board (or its delegate) approves the recommendation.

4. REFERENCES

Australian Council of Graduate Research Conflict of Interest in Examination Guidelines

5. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	R&RSC	May 2015	May 2015	
2	R&RSC	July 2020	July 2020	New template and updated website links
3	Research Committee	6 October 2023	6 October 2023	Integrated with HDR Degrees: Procedure of Conferral; modification of examination outcomes; incorporation of citation guidelines.
4	Research Committee	10 October 2025	10 October 2025	Addition of statement with NOITS; clarification of examination outcomes, corrections and final submission.
5	Research Committee	3 July 2026	3 July 2026	Reference to HDR Examination Policy; addition of Submission Panel from 1 January 2028.

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