Responsible officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Edwina Murphy
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Approved by	Research Committee
Responsible body	Research Committee
Initial approval date	19 April 2024
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Superseded documents	
Related documents	Academic Governance Charter Conferral Policy *HDR Examination and Ranking Form* HDR Thesis Examination and Conferral Procedure HDR Thesis Submission and Final Bound Copy Rules *Notice of Intention to Submit (NOITS)* Research Active Policy Research Integrity Policy Research Misconduct Procedure Thesis by Publication Guidelines
Related HE Standards	1.4.5, 1.4.6, 1.4.7, 4.2.1
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	Examination

1. PURPOSE

To ensure that assessment of major assessable research outputs for Higher Degrees by Research is conducted in accordance with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

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. SCOPE

This policy applies to the examination of MTh (Res), DMin, and PhD theses.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The Australian University of Theology (**AUT**) is committed to the assessment of HDR theses by examiners of international standing in the field of research who are independent of the research, competent to undertake the assessment, and who do not have a conflict of interest.

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1 International standing in the field of research

5.1.1 The abstract submitted with the Notice of Intention to Submit (NOITS) will give both the Research Office and potential examiners an indication of the field of research.

5.1.2 Recent publications will be taken as a guide to the international standing and suitability of examiners. Normally, appointed examiners would meet the AUT criteria of World Standard Research activity in the field of research, although other factors

may also be taken into account e.g. appointment at a prestigious university, significant contribution to the field over many years.

5.2 Independence of examiners

5.2.1 Supervisors and HDR candidates will indicate any potential conflicts of interest on the Notice of Intention to Submit (NOITS).

5.2.2 When approached to examine a thesis, potential examiners will be informed of the names of the candidate and supervisors and asked to indicate any potential conflicts of interest.

5.2.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) will determine whether a conflict of interest is significant enough to preclude the appointment of an examiner or whether it is sufficient for it to have been declared and explained, in line with the ACGR Guidelines.

5.2.4 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.

5.3 Competence of examiners

5.3.1 Examiners will be asked to complete the *HDR Examination and Ranking Form*, raising any research integrity concerns, assessing the thesis against the relevant criteria, justifying their responses, and ranking the thesis against others they have examined.

5.3.2 Examiners are not permitted to upload any portion of the thesis under examination into AI platform in order to protect the candidate's intellectual property.

5.3.3 Examiners who provide inadequate or conflicting information will be asked to resubmit their form. Failure to provide sufficient information will result in another examiner being appointed in their place.

5.3.4 Examiners will be paid an honorarium after submission of their completed *HDR Examination and Ranking Form* and honorarium claim form at the rate then current.

5.4 Number of examiners

5.4.1 Three examiners will be appointed for DMin and PhD examinations. These will all be external to the AUT, unless the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) believes there is a compelling reason for it to be otherwise. Under no circumstances will fewer than two examiners be external to the AUT.

5.4.2 Two examiners will be appointed for MTh (Res) examinations, at least one of whom will be external to the AUT.

5.4.3 Any internal examiners appointed must not be from the supervising college of the candidate.

5.5 Research Integrity

5.5.1 The candidate and principal supervisor both certify to the integrity of the thesis (and that the research has received the necessary ethics clearance, if appropriate) according to the HDR Thesis Submission and Final Bound Copy Rules.

5.5.2 Any potential research misconduct identified during the examination process will be dealt with in accordance with the Research Misconduct Procedure.

5.6 Higher Degree by Research Examination Panel and Research Committee

5.6.1 Members of the Higher Degree by Research Examination Panel (**HDREP**) who have supervised the candidate or who are from the same affiliated college will not participate in determining the recommendation to the Research Committee.

5.6.2 Members of the Research Committee who have supervised the candidate or who are from the same affiliated college will declare their conflict of interest at the meeting considering HDREP's recommendation.

5.7 Examination and Conferral

The examination will be conducted in accordance with the HDR Thesis Examination and Conferral Procedure.

6. REFERENCES

Australian Council of Graduate Research Conflict of Interest in Examination Guidelines

7. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Research Committee	19 April 2024	19 April 2024	Initial, consolidating existing policies and procedures.
2	Vice-Chancellor	June 2025	June 2025	New policy format, minor editorial updates to implement university status.
3	Research Committee	3 July 2026	3 July 2026	Research integrity updates.

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