



HDR EXAMINATION POLICY

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| Responsible officer | Deputy Dean and Director of Research |
| Contact | emurphy@actheology.edu.au |
| Approved by | Research Committee |
| Responsible body | Research Committee |
| Initial approval date | 19 April 2024 |
| Initial effective date | 19 April 2024 |
| Review date | April 2026 |
| Superseded documents | |
| Related documents | <i>Notice of Intention to Submit (NOITS)</i> HDR Thesis Examination and Conferral Procedure HDR Thesis Submission and Final Bound Copy Rules Panels of Research Committee Policy <i>HDR Examination and Ranking Form</i> Conferral Policy 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

Academic Board (AB) is the Academic Board of the **ACT**.

ACT is the *Australian College of Theology Limited*.

Affiliated College is an institution approved to offer an accredited higher education award of the **ACT**.

Candidate is a student enrolled for a **course of study**.

Director of Research is the officer of the **ACT** who manages all research and research training through the **Graduate School of Research**.

Graduate School of Research (GSR) is the division of **ACT** which oversees research and research training, managed by the **Director of Research** and overseen by the **Research Committee**.

Higher Degree by Research candidate is a candidate enrolled in the MTh (Res), DMin, and PhD degrees. Also known as an **HDR candidate**.



Higher Degree by Research Examination Panel (HDREP) is the panel which oversees the assessment of **HDR candidates'** material submitted for examination.

Principal Supervisor is the **supervisor** responsible for supervision of the research content and academic administration of an assigned **HDR candidate**.

Research Committee (RC) is the committee which oversees research and research training within the **ACT** through the **Graduate School of Research**.

Supervisor is a person who supervises an **HDR candidate** enrolled in a research course of the ACT.

3. SCOPE

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

4. POLICY STATEMENT

ACT 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 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 ACT 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 Director of 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*, assessing the thesis against the relevant criteria, justifying their responses, and ranking the thesis against others they have examined.

5.3.2 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.

5.3.3 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.

5.3 Number of examiners

5.3.1 Three examiners will be appointed for DMin and PhD examinations. These will all be external to the Australian College of Theology, unless the Director of Research believes there is a compelling reason for it to be otherwise. Under no circumstances will fewer than two examiners be external to the ACT.

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

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

5.4 Research Integrity

5.4.1 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.

5.4.2 If any potential research misconduct is identified during the examination process, it will be dealt with in accordance with the Research Misconduct Procedure.



5.5 HDR Examination Panel and Research Committee

5.5.1 Members of HDREP who have supervised the candidate or who are from the same affiliated college will not participate in determining the recommendation to Research Committee.

5.5.2 Members of 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.

5.6 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. |
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Any hard copy of this electronic document may not be current as the ACT regularly reviews its procedures. The latest version can be found online at actheology.edu.au