



Examination of Higher Degree by Research Candidates Policy Policy UP21/13 (F18/3010)

Policy Approver	Academic Board
Policy Sponsor	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Policy Owner	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)
Policy Secretary	Academic Secretary
Policy Type	Academic
Policy Category	Academic Governance

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out the requirements and responsibilities for examination of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students and their theses and should be read in conjunction with the relevant course rules and procedures.

2 Definitions

In this policy and any associated procedures,

Board is the Board of the Graduate Research School or its sub-committees, and includes actions delegated to its Chair

Graduate Research Coordinator is the person delegated by the Head of School to act on their behalf on matters pertaining to Higher Degree by Research candidates

Candidate is a student enrolled for a higher degree by research

Preliminary Report is the written assessment of the thesis to be completed by the examiners prior to the viva voce

Examination Report is the report of the examiners on the candidate's performance at the viva voce and includes a final agreed recommendation for classification

Viva Voce is the oral examination component of the PhD examination

Viva Chair is a University registered supervisor responsible for ensuring that the viva is conducted rigorously, fairly and respectfully, to provide guidance on policies as needed and to submit the final report to the Board

Examiners are all HDR examiners who are suitably qualified academics with expertise in the field of the thesis and have no conflict of interest with the student, supervisors or the University

Support Person is a person who provides practical or emotional assistance to a person involved in a complaint process (a support person cannot be the candidate's supervisor)

University is The University of Western Australia, and any and all subsidiary or associated entities.

University Community refers to all individuals who engage in University activity and/or use University property.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy relates to Higher Degree by Research Courses whose examination is managed by the Graduate Research School.

4 Policy Principles

4.1 Higher Degree by Research Examination

- 4.1.1 The University is committed to ensuring that all Higher Degree by Research theses submitted for examination:
- Make an original contribution to knowledge in the subject with which they deal. In the case of a doctoral course, the contribution must be substantial;
 - Uphold the university's principles of academic and research integrity and underscore the principles laid out in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018);
 - Are at the appropriate standard for the AQF level of the qualification; and
 - Demonstrate the quality of the English and general presentation are of a standard for publication.

4.2 Appointment and independence of Examiners

- 4.2.1 Doctoral examinations with a viva voce and research Masters examinations must be examined by at least two external examiners.
- 4.2.2 Doctoral examinations without a viva voce must be examined by at least three external examiners.
- 4.2.3 Examiners must be experts of international standing in the field, hold a higher degree or possess professional experience equivalent to the degree they are examining, and be independent of the University, supervisors and the student. At least one examiner needs to be based outside the State of Western Australia.
- 4.2.4 Examiners are nominated by the supervisors, endorsed by the student, approved by the Graduate Research Coordinator and appointed by the Board.
- 4.2.5 Potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest with examiners must be declared at the time of their nomination and are assessed by the Board.
- 4.2.6 Any party concerned with the examination of a thesis who becomes aware of the risk for potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest anywhere through the examination process has the responsibility to declare it to the Board responsible for the thesis examination. This remains the case notwithstanding that the conflict might not be their own.
- 4.2.7 The names of the examiners are not withheld from students, but neither students, supervisors nor heads of school may discuss any aspect of the examination with examiners during the examination process.
- 4.2.8 The Board may ask examiners to consult or otherwise communicate with each other after receipt of their reports.

4.3 Submission of the thesis

- 4.3.1 Theses must be submitted for examination to the Graduate Research School in accordance with the relevant Course Rules.
- 4.3.2 A thesis submitted for examination must be accompanied by certification from the supervisor(s) and Graduate Research Coordinator as confirmation that the form and content of the thesis are suitable for examination.
- 4.3.3 The Board may, in exceptional circumstances, accept for examination a thesis without the certification of the supervisor and the school and may also, after an examination is complete, notify the examiner(s) that the thesis was submitted without school support.

4.4 Examination of the thesis

- 4.4.1 The Board considers all reports on a thesis submitted for examination along with any other examinable components and makes a classification according to the rules of the course.
- 4.4.2 Students enrolling in the Doctor of Philosophy from 1 January 2018 are required to undertake a viva voce following receipt of written examination reports. Successful completion of the viva is required for award of the degree. Students who have withdrawn and are re-admitted are also subject to this clause.

4.5 The Viva Voce Examination

- 4.5.1 The viva voce panel comprises an internal Chair and two independent external examiners.
- 4.5.2 Viva examiners must be prepared to engage in the examination process and attend the viva voce at an agreed date.
- 4.5.3 Viva examiners submit preliminary written examination reports on the thesis before the viva is confirmed. If the recommendation is to Resubmit, award a Masters or Fail and this is confirmed by the Board, the viva does not proceed.
- 4.5.4 The Chair is a registered supervisor and normally a member of The University of Western Australia (UWA) staff from the same or a cognate discipline who is independent of both the candidate and their supervisors with regard to the project under examination.
- 4.5.5 The Chair represents the University and upholds the University's policies at the viva voce. The Chair plays no part in the assessment or recommendation for classification of thesis except to assist the examiners in reaching an agreement and completing the final Examination Report.
- 4.5.6 A student may only normally undertake a viva voce once for a single award.
- 4.5.7 In accordance with the University's commitment to support access and inclusion, a doctoral student may formally request a reasonable adjustment for their viva voce in consultation with UniAccess, the University's Disability Support Office for students.

4.6 Classification of the thesis

- 4.6.1 Examiners are asked to recommend a classification of the thesis from one for the following categories:
 - i. PASSED. The thesis be passed with no requirement for correction or amendment and the student be awarded the degree.

- ii. PASSED SUBJECT TO MINOR REVISION. The thesis be passed subject to minor revision as indicated and carried out to the satisfaction of the supervisor/s and Graduate Research Coordinator.
 - iii. PASSED, SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE AMENDMENT. The thesis be passed subject to substantive amendment, as indicated and carried out to the satisfaction of the supervisor/s and Graduate Research Coordinator, with a report to the Board.
 - iv. RESUBMIT. The thesis does not meet the required standard but has the potential to do so with additional data, substantial re-evaluation of the data, substantial re-writing, and/or additional significant material. The thesis is re-examined within a 12-month limit to recommend either Pass or Fail or an outcome in accordance with 3.6.3.
 - v. AWARD THE DEGREE OF MASTER. The thesis does not meet the standard to be awarded the Doctoral degree but be passed for the appropriate degree of MASTER.
 - vi. FAIL. The thesis does not meet the standard to be awarded the Doctoral degree or the degree of Master and the student is not permitted to resubmit the thesis in a revised form.
- 4.6.2 Dean's List nominees are selected from those HDR students whose thesis has been ranked outstanding (defined as being in the top 5% of theses reviewed) by the appointed external examiners, and through review and discussion at the Board.
- 4.6.3 In the event of divergent examiners' reports, the School is consulted for their confidential feedback which is then presented to the Board who make a determination. Neither the reports nor the feedback can be shared with the candidate at this stage.
- 4.6.4 The final decision on the award of a degree rests with the Board.
- 4.6.5 A student whose thesis is classified as Resubmit must resubmit the thesis for examination within one calendar year of the date of notification of classification as detailed in the Examination Procedures.
- 4.6.6 A thesis may be resubmitted only once during the examination process
- 4.6.7 Completed theses are made available on the University's repository, except when there is restricted access or an embargo is required for a set period of time.

4.7 Appeals

- 4.7.1 A student wishing to appeal the outcome of an examination must submit a case in writing as detailed in the University policy on: Review and Appeal of Academic Decisions for Courses Managed by the Graduate Research School (UP18/4).

Related forms: Procedures

See reference to the University Procedures: UP18/3 Examination of Higher Degree by Research Candidates including Viva Voce