

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF RESEARCH DEGREES

Victoria University offers a number of research degrees for which a thesis or other research based work is the major component of assessment. These include Masters Degrees by Research, the Doctor of Philosophy Degree and two Professional Doctorates (the Doctor of Business Administration and the Doctor of Education).

For the doctoral research degrees, three examiners, external to the University are appointed. For Masters by Research awards two examiners, external to the University, are appointed. (In the case of examination of a performance or exhibition an additional reserve examiner is required).

DEFINITION OF RESEARCH DEGREES

Masters by Research: This degree has the objective of training a student in the application and critical evaluation of research methods and methodology by the conduct of a specified program of research under appropriate supervision. The thesis for a Master by Research degree is expected to be between 30,000 - 60,000 words.

A Masters Degree is awarded after examiners are satisfied that the student has demonstrated:

- A thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research by both a thorough review of the literature and application;
- Competence in the chosen field through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work.

Doctor of Philosophy: This degree provides training and education in research under appropriate supervision, with the objective of producing researchers capable of conducting research independently, at a high level of originality and quality. A doctoral student should uncover or create new knowledge by the discovery of new information, formulation of theories, development of new approaches, or the innovative re-interpretation of existing ideas, theories or approaches. A PhD thesis is expected to be 60,000 - 100,000 words long.

A Doctor of Philosophy degree is awarded after examiners are satisfied that the student has demonstrated:

- A deep and thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research;
- Competence in the chosen field through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work;
- Independence of thought and approach;
- Has made an original contribution to knowledge.

Professional Doctorate: The Professional Doctorate is a research degree that focuses on the issues and problems of a particular profession. It includes up to one third of assessed work as coursework. It is expected that this coursework will support the development of the thesis.

This degree has the objective of developing a student as a professional, able to research into their professional field at a high level of originality and quality. The professional doctorate provides education and training and development to assist candidates to develop new information or insight within their professional area.

The degree differs from the Ph.D in that it deals with issues and problems specific to the profession. The work sits on a robust theoretical underpinning but the overall purpose is to extend knowledge that

will clearly impact on professional practice rather than further develop theoretical arguments. This does not mean that theory will not be extended, but this will not be the focus.

A Doctor of Business Administration thesis is expected to be 45,000 to 65,000 words long and a Doctor of Education thesis 50,000 to 60,000 words long.

A professional doctorate is awarded after examiners are satisfied that the student had demonstrated.

- A thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research;
- Competence in the professional area through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work;
- Independence of thought and approach;
- Has made an original contribution to practice and/or extending knowledge within the profession.

GRADING OF THESES

The University uses five categories for examiners' recommendations. Examiners are asked to select one category on the form supplied, and to attach a detailed report, elaborating on the selected category, to be seen by the student, supervisor, and Chair of Examiners.

Where a recommendation is made conditional on changes, amendments, or requests for elaboration, it is important for the student that the *specific nature of the changes, amendments, or elaboration be made as clearly as possible in the report.*

CATEGORIES FOR EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATION

- *PASSED without further correction.*

This indicates that the thesis is an excellent piece of work, which may be passed unconditionally. [Note: An examiner may note minor areas that would benefit from further editing]

- *PASSED subject to minor corrections as outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners.*

This category is used when the examiner considers there to be some relatively minor flaws that need attention but do not detract from the overall quality of the work. This may characteristically entail additional proofing, textual amendments or corrections. The examiner's report indicates the specific corrections required.

When this category is recommended, the principal supervisor oversees corrections and endorses the detailed list of amendments made by the candidate. This is forwarded to the Chair of Examiners. The corrected version is then submitted for classification.

Examiners do not see the thesis again.

- ❑ *PASSED subject to substantial amendment as outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners.*

This category is used when it is considered that there are one or more areas that require amendment, but that with these amendments the work has sufficient integrity to pass. Characteristically, the amendment(s) will relate to clearly definable sections or elements, which are detailed in the examiner's report.

When this category is recommended, the principal supervisor oversees corrections and endorses the detailed list of amendments made by the candidate. This is forwarded to the Chair of Examiners. The corrected version is then submitted for classification.

Examiners do not see the thesis again.

- ❑ *DEFERRED and the candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/work in a revised form.*

This category is used where the examiner believes that there is need for a significant revision without which the thesis/work cannot be passed. A deferred result implies that the thesis/work is well-grounded and, with additional work, as indicated, can pass. The specific revisions recommended are detailed in the examiner's report.

A thesis/work with a deferred result may be returned to the examiner for re-examination. A re-examined thesis can only be graded as PASS or FAIL.

- ❑ *FAILED*

The result is recommended when a thesis/work is so fundamentally flawed in conception, methodology, methods, and/or overall conduct that even major revisions would not redeem it.

CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Postgraduate Research Coordinator (for Doctoral candidates) and the Faculty Student Advice Officer (for Master by Research candidates).

Postgraduate Research Coordinator

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If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the Postgraduate Research Coordinator/Faculty Student Advice Officer will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners.