



**VICTORIA  
UNIVERSITY**

# **GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS – DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

Graduate Research School

19/06/2025

Final

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is a professional research doctoral degree offered through the Colleges of Business and Law and Justice at Victoria University. It differs in several important ways from the Doctor of Philosophy, which we ask you to keep in mind when examining the thesis.

## **STRUCTURE**

The Doctor of Business Administration 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 DBA is a four-year (full-time equivalent) programme based on a combination of coursework subjects and research thesis. The coursework subjects required comprise of doctoral level business subjects taken in the first year of the programme. At the completion of the coursework, candidates must pass a comprehensive examination.

The research thesis is then completed over the next two years of the programme. It is deemed to have two-thirds of the weighting for the programme.

An Australian PhD is based on the thesis, alone. It is based on a three to four year (full-time equivalent) course of research.

## **THESIS**

The thesis for the DBA is seen as having the same essential features of that of a PhD. However, as the DBA thesis comprises two-thirds of the weighting of the programme and is completed in two-thirds of the time of a PhD, the expectations of size and breadth of the thesis are also smaller. That is, the thesis for the DBA would be 45,000 – 65,000 words and have a more contained focus compared to a PhD thesis of 60,000 – 80,000 words.

The thesis differs from the PhD 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.

The Doctor of Business Administration is awarded after examiners are satisfied that the student has 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; and
- Has made an original contribution to practice and/or extending knowledge within the profession.

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Graduate Research Training**

Victoria University adopts best practice in managing research conduct and ensures all research complies with the [Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research](#). To uphold the integrity and confidentiality of the thesis examination, Examiners are **not permitted** to use Generative AI technologies to support, prepare or write their examiner's report.

## 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 candidate, supervisor, and Chair of Examiners.

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

## CATEGORIES FOR EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATION

**Table 1 - Categories for Examiners' Recommendation**

<i>PASSED without further correction</i>	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.)
<i>PASSED subject to minor corrections</i>	<i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i>  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. Examiners do not see the thesis again.
<i>PASSED subject to substantial amendment</i>	<i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i>  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. Examiners do not see the thesis again.
<i>DEFERRED</i>	<i>The candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/work in a revised form</i>  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

	<p>work, as indicated, can pass. The specific revisions recommended are detailed in the examiner's report.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>FAILED</b>	<p>This result is recommended with the thesis/work is so fundamentally flawed in conception, methodology, methods, and/or overall conduct that even major revisions would not redeem it.</p>

It would be of assistance to the University if the recommendation and report could include specific comments on the following:

- to what extent and how the thesis;
  - makes a contribution to the knowledge of the subject with which it deals, and
  - shows that the candidate understands the relationship of the investigation to the wider context of the knowledge in which it belongs;
- the ability of the candidate to survey the relevant literature and to document statements adequately;
- the extent to which the candidate's attitude to their own work and to the work of others is critical and perceptive;
- whether the literary presentation of the thesis is satisfactory;
- any changes which should be made to the thesis before the degree is awarded.

## THESIS QUALITY

In addition to providing their examiners' report, examiners are also asked when examining a Doctor of Business Administration, to assess the quality of the thesis and generic attributes.

## CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Graduate Research School.

If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the Graduate Research School will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners at [researchexaminations@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchexaminations@vu.edu.au)