
PhD (Integrated) and Year 1 Program:

Manual for Students (and Supervisors)

Semester 1, 2023

Welcome to the VU PhD (Integrated)

This is the start of an exciting journey toward achieving your PhD. This Manual provides you with background information about the PhD (Integrated) Year 1 Program - its structure, requirements and how you can make it best work for you and your research needs.

Please make sure you read through this Manual carefully, discuss the key elements and expectations of the PhD (Integrated) program with your supervisor, and keep it with you for reference.

If you have any queries, please contact:

- **Academic Coordinator, Year 1, PhD (Integrated):** Rose.Lucas@vu.edu.au
- **Administrative Support:** Research.coursework@vu.edu.au

'The coursework has prepared me well for the minor thesis. I have been so happy with the Integrated PhD process and feel very prepared for embarking on the next stage next year.'

From a 2017 PhD (Integrated) student
on submitting her Year 1 Thesis

Glossary of terms used in this Manual:

AC: Academic Coordinator, Year 1, PhD (Integrated) program, Graduate Research Centre

Confirmation of Candidature: first university milestone; the process whereby a candidate (and their candidature) is confirmed by means of an extensive written research proposal and presentation to a panel.

HDR: Higher Degree by Research, usually referring to student undertaking any research degree

Pre-Confirmation: the period before a research proposal – and thus a candidate – is confirmed. Candidature is provisional during this period

ORTQI: Office for Research Training, Quality and Integrity

Student, graduate researcher: general terms to describe someone undertaking a higher degree by research in the pre- Confirmation of Candidature phase

UC: Unit Coordinator, coursework unit leader

Contents

Welcome to the VU PhD (Integrated)	2
Contents	3
Introduction.....	4
Enrolment Process	4
Advanced Standing	5
Enrolment load	5
Course structure	5
Exit award.....	5
Year 1 components	6
PhD (Integrated) Course Map: full-time	7
PhD (Integrated) Course Map: part-time.....	7
Year 1 Timetable	8
Getting Started	9
Years 2-4 structure.....	9
Confirmation of Candidature (Year 2)	9
The ‘Shell’ Units	10
Designing ‘Shell’ Units (contact AC for further information).....	10
Process for establishing Shell Units:.....	12
Shell Units and supervision	13
Additional Skills Workshops in Year 1 of the PhD (Integrated)	13
The Year 1 Thesis in the PhD (Integrated)	13
What is the Year 1 Thesis?	13
Ethics Application and Approval.....	14
Extensions of time for Year 1 Thesis submission	15
Key Criteria for all formats of Year 1 Thesis (as per documentation provided to examiners)	15
Submission and Examination of the thesis	18
Assessing the year 1 Thesis:	19
Revise and Resubmit Options:.....	20
Supervision	21
1. Prior to initial unit enrolment.....	21
2. During the first Semester (FT) or first 2 semesters (PT).....	21
3. During the second Semester (FT) or third and fourth semesters (PT)	22
Appendix 1: Getting Started: PhD (Integrated) VU MyPlan questions	23
Appendix 2: Australian Qualifications Framework level 9.....	25
Semester 2, 2022 Timetable	26

Introduction

The PhD (Integrated) was introduced at VU in 2016. It is designed to enable PhD graduate researchers without recent and rigorous research experience to undertake two semesters of coursework together with a Year 1 thesis (a total of 96 credit points) to prepare them to complete a PhD within the required 4 years. PhD (Integrated) students must fulfil the hurdle requirement (70% minimum average across the coursework units and 70% minimum in the Year 1 thesis) in order to proceed to years 2-4 of the Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated).

Importantly, this new PhD program is not a lesser doctoral program because PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers gain their PhD via an alternative entry pathway. This program results in the same doctoral degree (PhD) at AQF10 Level.

While VU is a forerunner in this area, the title of the program, PhD (Integrated) is now used at a number of Australian universities¹ and was chosen because **the Year 1 thesis constitutes initial work on the doctoral project, which will subsequently be 'integrated' into the Year 2-4 thesis.**

Enrolment Process

- The student is accepted into the VU PhD (Integrated) program and receives a letter of offer, a draft unit timetable and copy of this Manual.
- In Year 1 of the program, the student will undertake 5 coursework units (3 units + 2 specialisation units) plus the Year 1 Thesis.
- The Academic Coordinator will complete the Year 1 Structure form for the student, recommending 2 specialisation units to be confirmed by the supervisor, based on the student's proposed research topic and background. **NB Any changes to the elective enrolment will need to be made no later than March 1, 2023.**
- Students are required to attend the **PhD (Integrated) Program Induction on Monday February 13, in-person in P134.**
- **In S2 2022, all classes will be conducted in person unless otherwise notified. Students will be contacted by unit coordinators one week before the class commences. (First class February 20, 2023)**
- Students should begin work with their supervisors on their research topic from the commencement of the program, determining what aspect of the doctoral project will be addressed in the Year 1 Thesis.
- Please note that PhD (Integrated) students are also required to attend **the Graduate Researcher at VU Orientation on Friday 17 March, 2023 on Footscray Park Campus.**
- At commencement of Year 1, ORTQI will enroll students into units for that calendar year. **NB: After initial enrolment, all changes are the responsibility of the student, to be done via MyVU.** Any changes to the original Year 1 Structure need to be approved by both Supervisor and AC.

¹ As of 2016, VU, Edith Cowan University and the University of Wollongong all offer PhD (Integrated) programs

Advanced Standing

Given that the PhD (Integrated) program is specifically designed to support students who are without research experience, please note that Advanced Standing is not normally available in the Year 1 program; application can only be made for core units UGR7001 and UGR7003 in exceptional circumstances. If the graduate researcher believes they have a case for [Advanced Standing](#) (i.e. 'credit' or 'RPL') they should first contact the AC for advice concerning the likely outcome. They are then required to fill in an application form. An International student granted Advanced Standing may be required to undertake an additional elective to ensure that their load meets the requirements of VU International and home country authorities. Students applying for Advanced Standing in a unit should not enrol in that unit until the outcome of their application is known.

Enrolment load

A full-time student in the PhD (Integrated) program undertakes 48 credit points in both semesters of Year 1. A part-time student must undertake 24 credit units across each of the 4 HE semesters which will be required to complete Year 1. If your circumstances change, it may be possible to alter your status between f/t and p/t during the Year 1 Program.

Course structure

The PhD (Integrated) comprises an intensive Year 1 Program which leads into Years 2-4 of the doctoral project PhD (see pp. 8-10). While students retain the PhD (Integrated) title and code throughout their doctoral degree, they will graduate with PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) on their academic testamur.

- Year 1 comprises a mix of units of study (a total of 96 credit points equivalent to 8 x 12 point units), including **3 core units and 2 specialisation units plus the 36 point Year 1 Thesis** (see below).
- **An average of 70% across all 5 units plus 70% minimum result for the Year 1 thesis component is required in order for the graduate student to proceed to Confirmation of Candidature and Years 2-4 during which the PhD will be completed.**
- After a successful Year 1 of the PhD (Integrated), students will attend Towards Confirmation workshops, to assist them in the preparation of the research proposal and presentation required at Confirmation of Candidature.

Exit award

A PhD (Integrated) graduate researcher who achieves a pass mark of 50% or above in all components, but does not fulfil the hurdle requirement (70% minimum average across the coursework units and 70% minimum in the Year 1 thesis) or who does not wish to proceed to years 2-4 of the Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated), will be eligible to apply for UMRP Master of Research Practice exit award (please note that it is not possible to enrol directly into this Master of Research Practice). Students wishing to take this exit qualification should contact the AC. Should the student not achieve the required hurdle but elect not to take out the exit qualification, they may face Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings.

Year 1 components

96 credit points, incorporating 6 components (i.e. 3 core units, 2 specialisation units + the Year 1 Thesis). Please follow links for more information on units.

<p>Core Components</p> <p>72 credit points</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UGR7001 Introduction to Research Methodology 12 pts; every semester 2. UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development 12 pts; every semester 3. UGR7003 Research Integrity and Ethics 12 pts; every semester 4. Year 1 Thesis (36 pts – 12,000-15,000 words): conceptualised as a sub- project of the planned PhD <p>Full-time (in one semester): UGR7903 (36 points)</p> <p>Part-time (over 2 semesters): UGR7901 Year One Thesis A (12 points) + UGR7902 Year One Thesis B (24 points)</p>
<p>Specialisation components 4 & 5 (students will take 2 of the following as advised by AC and supervisor)</p> <p>2 x 12 credit points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UGR7004 Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods 12 points; each semester 2 • UGR7005 Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods 12 points; each semester 1 • UGR7006 Enhancing Researcher Knowledge and Skills ('Shell' units) 12 points (see below); as required • UGR7007 Enhancing Research Capability ('Shell' units) 12 points each (see below); as required

PhD (Integrated) Course Map: full-time

Semester 1:

UGR7001 Introduction to Research Methodology
UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development
UGR7003 Research Integrity and Ethics
Specialisation Unit 1

Semester 2:

Specialisation Unit 2
Year 1 Thesis 36 points (due end of October)

Students who achieve a pass mark of 50% or above in all Year 1 units, but who do not fulfil the hurdle requirement (70% min average across the coursework units and 70% min in the Year 1 thesis), will be eligible for **UMRP Master of Research Practice exit award.**

An average of 70% min across all 5 units plus 70% minimum result for the Year 1 Thesis component is required in order for the graduate student to proceed to Confirmation of Candidature and Years 2-4 during which the PhD will be completed.

Confirmation Workshops
(February, May, August or October)

Confirmation of Candidature 3-6 months from the conclusion of a successful Year One

PhD Years 2-4

PhD (Integrated) Course Map: part-time

Semester 1:
UGR7001 Introduction to Research Methodology
UGR7003 Research Integrity and Ethics

Semester 2:
UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development
Specialisation Unit 1

Semester 3:
Specialisation Unit 2
Year 1 Thesis Part A (12 points)

Semester 4:
Year 1 Thesis Part B (24 points)

Students who achieve a pass mark of 50% or above in all Year 1 units, but who do not fulfil the hurdle requirement (70% min average across the coursework units and 70% min in the Year 1 thesis) or who do not wish to proceed to years 2-4 of the Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated), will normally be eligible for **UMRP Master of Research Practice exit award**.

An average of 70% min across all 5 units plus 70% minimum result for the Year 1 Thesis component is required in order for the graduate student to proceed to Confirmation of Candidature and Years 2-4 during which the PhD will be completed.

Confirmation Workshops
(February, May, August or October)

Confirmation of Candidature 3-6 months from the conclusion of a successful
Year One

PhD Years 2-4

Year 1 Timetable

Research students are enrolled into two academic semesters per year. The HDR coursework units are undertaken and examined across these 12 week study periods. A Compulsory Program Induction for all PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers is held before

classes begin in Week 1 and focuses on the requirements of the Year 1 program and returning to study in a doctoral program. All VU graduate researchers are also required to attend the general Graduate Researcher Orientation held on 26 August, 2022 via Zoom.

Getting Started

1. HDR Researcher Integrity Modules

From the point of your enrolment into the Year 1 Program, you are required to undertake 3-4 HDR Researcher Integrity modules. These modules will take approximately 20 minutes each and will assist you in the preparation for your research project. The issues you cover in overview here you will revisit in greater detail and with application to your own project, in the coursework units. You can find the modules on VU Collaborate, in the 'support and collaborate' space. Please note, you will need your enrolment details to access VU Collaborate; please contact Researcher.Development@vu.edu.au if you have difficulties accessing the modules.

2. Supervision.

Students are expected to meet with their supervisors to discuss their research projects as soon as you are enrolled. In S2 2021, this is likely to be by zoom or a combination of remote and f2f meeting. While meetings will be arranged as suits student and supervisor, in general you should expect to meet with your supervisor for an hour every two weeks (if f/t), or monthly if p/t.

3. Coursework in the Year 1 Program

PhD (Integrated) units are taught within the VU HE semester dates. The classes for core units UGR7001 , 7002 and 7003 are taught sequentially in intensive mode, twice weekly over 4 weeks, as evening classes (full-time students will take these intensive units in a single semester; part-time students will take UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development the following semester). Specialisation units will either be taught in evening mode or during a weekday. All classes will be a combination of zoom presentation and large group/small group discussion format, supported by lectures, resources, assessments on our blended learning platform, VU Collaborate.

Years 2-4 structure

When the results for all Year 1 units are received (including the Year 1 Thesis), ORTQI will contact the graduate researcher and the supervisor, confirming that the graduate researcher is eligible to proceed to Confirmation of Candidature. If you are continuing into the doctoral phase, you will be required to attend a Towards Confirmation workshop to help you transition from your Year 1 Thesis to the doctoral proposal. Students who have completed the Year 1 Program in the PhD Integrated will not be required to take the PhD coursework units.

Confirmation of Candidature (Year 2)

In the same way as for all HDR students, PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers must successfully achieve the milestone of [Confirmation of Candidature](#) before they are able to proceed to years 2-4. In the case of PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers, presentation for **Candidature should typically be at approximately three months from the commencement of their second year**, which commences with the conclusion of the Towards Confirmation workshops and presentations. The pre-candidature phase is truncated for PhD (Integrated) students because they have already covered the equivalent of

the PhD Coursework Units and completed a section of the PhD thesis project in their Year 1 Thesis

Mid Candidature Review/Towards Submission Review

PhD Integrated students are *not* required to undertake the Mid Candidature Review. They will however, need to present to a Towards Submission panel 6 months before submission (f/t).

The 'Shell' Units

Designing 'Shell' Units (contact [AC](#) for further information)

The Year 1 program specialisation unit choices include two 'Shell' units: **UGR7006 Enhancing Researcher Knowledge and Skills** and **UGR7007 Enhancing Research Capability**, each of 12 credit points.

NB: A shell unit should only be selected when the AC or Supervisor consider that there is specialist knowledge or skills which the student will need to build ***which are not offered in the existing electives in the Year 1 Program***

The shell units have been approved by the University to enable flexibility to accommodate any negotiated curriculum which is required by a particular graduate researcher in the context of their prior studies and proposed research topic. It is anticipated that this curriculum might encompass elements such as:

- an existing 12 credit point AQF9 or AQF10 unit offered by a College such as Project Management or an update/current issues/current debates-style unit on contemporary developments in their discipline OR
- a specially designed reading unit, and/or combination of readings and a series of researcher development workshops run by VU (eg advanced training in specific quantitative research methods) or outside bodies (such as ACSPRI). NB curriculum and assessment must be approved by the AC as being equivalent to a 12 credit point AQF9 unit.
- Shell units are designed by the supervisor in consultation with the AC, PhD (Integrated); they will then design a curriculum of activities, in conformity with the learning volume and outcome of AQF 9.
- The AC will also operate as the Unit Coordinator for the shell unit. *UGR7006 Enhancing Researcher Knowledge and Skills* and *UGR7007 Enhancing Research Capability* are both 12 point units at AQF level 9, but are slightly different in emphasis:
- *UGR7006 Enhancing Researcher Knowledge and Skills* provides PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers with an opportunity to **undertake a program of advanced**

study in order to gain mastery of *an area of their discipline or of advanced disciplinary skills* related to their research project.

- UGR7007 *Enhancing Research Capability* provides an opportunity for PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers **to gain mastery of an advanced body of knowledge and advanced research skills in areas of research practice** which have been identified as relevant to their research project but are not covered elsewhere in the Year 1 program.
- PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers should have a level of independence and flexibility in negotiating with the academic supervisor regarding how they might evidence their learning.

While it is possible for a Shell Unit to comprise an existing 12 credit point unit at AQF9 or AQF10 offered by the College or by an outside body, this approach presents some challenges which need to be dealt with in advance:

- Such activities – particularly in the case of outside bodies - will often be fee-paying. It is the responsibility of the College to provide funding.
- Unit Coordinators of existing College units may be reluctant to allow an additional student to undertake their unit, particularly if this includes assessment. This may mean that special arrangements need to be negotiated in advance with the Coordinator of the unit and/or the College to permit this, or alternatively that the PhD (Integrated) graduate researcher may ‘audit’ the unit (i.e. attend classes etc.) but be assessed separately by the supervisor; this may actually be an advantage as it allows the supervisor to require the PhD (Integrated) graduate researcher to relate the unit material to their proposed Year 1 thesis topic as part of the assessment.
- If a Shell Unit is undertaken in the PhD (Integrated) graduate researcher’s first semester, there may be very limited time for its design, which presents particular problems where an existing unit is to be undertaken. Shell units need to be planned as far in advance as possible. We recommend that where possible, shell units are not undertaken in the first semester of study. However, this will be determined by the AC and the supervisor on an individual basis.

Process for establishing Shell Units:

	ACTION	DONE
1	The supervisor will determine the focus and content of the shell unit with input from the graduate researcher, according to a Key Elements document supplied by the AC. Would the student be as well suited by one of the ORTQI electives? What content does the student need to cover in their shell unit to support their project? Will this come from existing units and/or be formally devised by the supervisor?	
2	The supervisor will provide the AC with Key Elements for the student's learning in the Shell Unit. The AC, operating as the Unit Coordinator, as per VU requirements, will incorporate this into a Unit Guide for the student and supervisor's use.	
3	The supervisor/s will interact with the AC to ensure that the Shell Unit Guide clearly demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conformity with the generic learning outcomes and a statement concerning how the generic learning outcomes will be met through the specificity of the negotiated curriculum 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate assessment tasks which must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> include a Learning Needs Analysis agreed by the student and the academic supervisor and a critical reflection be in line with VU Policy Assessment for Learning, and include a formative piece of assessment (no more than 30%) by week 3 of the 10 week unit period include assessment rubrics for all assessment tasks at AQF9 level have a total word equivalence of 4,500 – 5,500 words 	
5	The resulting Unit Guide will be discussed and agreed with the graduate researcher. The completed Unit Guide then forms the basis of the agreement between supervisor and graduate researcher, as well as the student's guide throughout the semester, and will be reflected on the VU Collaborate space.	
6	The Unit Guide will be lodged with the AC at the commencement of the teaching period (to coincide with the semester timetable).	
7	The supervisor will return a result to the AC/VU Collaborate at the conclusion of the semester, using the appropriate marking template	

NB: Shell Units should run concurrently with the other PhD (Integrated) units, covering 10 weeks equivalent in the HE semester. Results will be due to the AC at the end of the semester in which the unit is taken.

Shell Units and supervision

A shell unit is devised to address a student's learning needs which are not met by existing elective units. It should then directly reflect the knowledge and skills which the supervisor considers are necessary for this particular student to undertake their particular project. Working with the student on the shell unit therefore constitutes a key element of the supervision for that semester – thereby supporting the central task of helping the student develop a viable project for the Year 1 Thesis. It is *part* of supervision – not additional to it.

Additional Skills Workshops in Year 1 of the PhD (Integrated)

The Year 1 Program is an intensive experience. The graduate researcher will be challenged by the competing demands of coursework units and designing and undertaking the Year 1 Thesis research project in the context of planning for the larger PhD. While VU offers a range of skills workshops (through the [Researcher Development](#) program), **we do not usually recommend that students undertake any additional researcher development during this period.** There will be an opportunity to explore additional researcher development in the research phase of the PhD and as particular researcher development needs become more apparent.

The Year 1 Thesis in the PhD (Integrated)

What is the Year 1 Thesis?

The Year 1 Thesis is a minor thesis designed to provide students with a contained experience of research; the learnings from the Year 1 Thesis - and perhaps even specific elements of the Year 1 Thesis itself – should ideally be integrated into the doctoral project undertaken in Years 2-4 following the successful completion of Year 1.

The PhD (Integrated) graduate researcher enrolls in the Year 1 thesis units to the value of 36 credit points; the Year 1 Thesis is the equivalent of 3 coursework units which are assessed in the format of a minor thesis.

If full time (f/t), the student will take all 36 points of the Year 1 thesis in one semester; if part time (p/t), the Year 1 Thesis will be split into 2 components over consecutive semesters (A/D = 12 credit points, B/E = 24 credit points).

Because it is a sub-project or phase 1 of the PhD, the student will begin planning for and working on the Year 1 Thesis from the beginning of their enrolment. It will operate as the project which is informed by the coursework and its assessments. The formal Year 1 Thesis enrolment occurs *after* the majority of the coursework units, as the units are designed to help students prepare for the research component. **However, graduate researchers will begin meeting with their supervisor at the beginning of Year 1 and continue to meet regularly with them during the course of their enrolment in the PhD (Integrated), to conceptualise and prepare for the Year 1 Thesis.**

The graduate researcher must demonstrate substantial progress towards completion of the Year 1 thesis through formal meetings with their academic supervisors, who will provide formative feedback. In this way, students will have designed the research project of the Year

1 Thesis with the support of both coursework coordinators and supervisors, thereby ensuring its viability before it is undertaken.

There is no one definitive model for the Year 1 Thesis. Its exact scope and focus needs to be determined via both the coursework units (especially UGR7002) and the process of supervision.

The Year 1 thesis (12,000- 15,000 words) is designed to:

- provide the graduate researcher with research experience equivalent to that gained in a Coursework Masters minor thesis (AQF 9)
- enable the graduate researcher to gain experience of all phases in the research process (so it cannot just be an extended literature review)
- act as a hurdle requirement in terms of demonstrated research experience for continuing to the full PhD thesis (70% required)
- enable the graduate researcher to conduct and write up a small, ethically low-risk project, designed through the Year 1 Unit UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development and conceptualised as a sub-project of the planned PhD research, in one of the following ways:
 - as a pilot study; OR
 - as one aspect of the study (e.g. phase one); OR
 - a conceptual or theoretical framework for the doctoral project; OR
 - as another initial research project linked to the planned larger project appropriate to the discipline

The Year 1 thesis is to be assessed at the level of [AQF 9](#) ([see also Australian Qualifications Framework 9 and 10](#)), i.e. at a level comparable with a Masters by Coursework minor thesis.

NB The timelines for the Year 1 Thesis are very short, particularly for full-time graduate researchers. This successful completion of the Year 1 Thesis will require careful planning on the part of both the researcher and the supervisor. **Any extensions must be formally documented; all Year 1 Theses for f/t commencing students S1 2023 will be due for examination by 26 October 2023; p/t October 2024.**

Ethics Application and Approval

Please note, any ethics applications required for the Year 1 Thesis must be low risk.

When to make your Ethics application:

- early enough that you can get the work done for the Year 1 Thesis (**please note that you are not permitted to undertake work requiring ethics approval before that approval is given**).
- far enough into your planning for the Year 1 Thesis that you know precisely what you will need the application for. You should anticipate having it submitted by the end of the semester previous to enrolment in the Year 1 Thesis unit/s.

- you must discuss this with your supervisor who is the Chief Investigator on the Ethics application

A full application has to be completed through [QUEST](#), and submitted by your supervisor as CI.

NB: Students must also notify both the Ethics Chair, Deborah.Zion@vu.edu.au and Research.Ethics@vu.edu.au by email when the Quest application is submitted.

This notification will lead to a fast-tracked Chair's Review.

Please indicate very clearly in your email:

- **This is a Year 1 Thesis application.**
- **Your Name**
- **Your supervisor's name**
- **The name of the project**

Approval will be processed within 5 days approximately. Please make sure you follow up with Research.Ethics@vu.edu.au after one week if you haven't heard from them.

Extensions of time for Year 1 Thesis submission

Short extensions of time may be requested by the supervisor and may be approved by the AC provided that:

- the supervisor has arranged for the examiner to be still provide the result within the original time frame.
- the proposed new submission date will permit the graduate researcher to receive their result in time to join the workshop series Towards Confirmation in the early months of the following semester

If more time is required, the graduate researcher will need to take Intermission. This should be discussed with the AC to determine the appropriate dates, before application using [this VU form](#).

Key Criteria for all formats of Year 1 Thesis (as per documentation provided to examiners)

- 12000-15000 words, written to AQF 9 level
- A sub-project of the proposed PhD (as appropriate to topic and discipline)
- A coherent research project which demonstrates the key aspects of research:
 - A research question which is clearly articulated and logically followed within the structure of the thesis—i.e. the examiner should be able to see the

relationship between the RQ and how you are addressing it in your methodology, and how the literature you are reviewing relates to the RQ

- A sense of context within relevant scholarly literature. This should be demonstrated within the thesis discussion as well as in the references—i.e. the references clearly relate to the RQ, and your discussion makes clear how the literature being reviewed is relevant to the RQ, in terms of (1) whose ideas you are building on, and (2) an indication that there is a knowledge gap in the literature that your RQ is addressing
- A methodology appropriate to the question which is competently and systematically applied—with explicit justification for the chosen methodology in terms of suitability for addressing your RQ
- Future Doctoral Research: A clear section following the Abstract, no more than 1 page, to indicate how this sub-project will transition into the larger PhD project. If the purpose of the Year 1 thesis was to test the applicability of a particular method or theory, or establish the policy framework for interrogating the results of interviews or statistical analysis, this section could specify what modifications might be planned for the PhD if the Year 1 thesis demonstrates that a proposed approach is not applicable or suitable for the overall PhD project.
- An Abstract (150 words)
- Professional document presentation, including:
 - Appropriate use of titles, headings and sub-headings
 - Use of sections (i.e. Introduction, Chapters, Conclusion)
 - Grammatical and fluent academic prose
 - Within word limit (references not included)
 - Consistent use of selected referencing system
 - Scholarly reference list (not included in word count)

Depending on the proposed PhD project, the Year 1 Thesis can be undertaken in 3 formats:

1. By Traditional thesis
2. By Publication
3. By Creative Project and Exegesis

1. The Traditional Thesis

12,000-15,000 words as per above.

2. Thesis by Creative Project and Exegesis (see also Key Criteria):

Where the proposed PhD thesis is likely to take the form of a creative project and an exegesis, students could:

- Use the Year 1 Thesis task as an opportunity to develop the critical framework for the overall PhD, ie the aims and research question, positioning within the relevant literature and the justification of methodology (creative and exegetical). It is likely that it is this kind of scholarly discourse and situating which the student has had less

experience of; the Year 1 Thesis would then become the basis of the exegesis. As per the final PhD submission,

- The Exegesis elucidates the purpose and effect of the creative product, reflects and comments critically upon its processes of production, and places it into a broader disciplinary and research context. It might also demonstrate the positioning of the creative artist as a researcher and not merely as a practitioner.
 - While more flexible in its form than a conventional thesis, an Exegesis should still produce a Research Question which serves the function of providing a conceptual overview of the discussion, situating the creative work within relevant fields of knowledge and debate.
- Students could include a small element of creative component (eg 3,000 words of the 12-15,000 words), which is then situated with a critical exegesis as per above.

3. Thesis by Publication (see also Key Criteria):

In this kind of thesis, the final PhD will involve a series of published papers together with contextualised linking material (ie a kind of exegesis). Students in the Year 1 Thesis who anticipate undertaking a PhD by Publication have two options:

- a. Students could use the Year 1 Thesis task as an opportunity to develop the critical framework for the overall PhD, ie the research question, the relevant literature and the justification of methodology (creative and exegetical). The Year 1 Thesis could become the conceptual and scholarly basis for the linking material, which will frame the various published studies. As per the final PhD submission, this framing and linking material should:
 - contextualise the research problem;
 - justify the theoretical framework;
 - review the relevant literature (especially that not covered in depth within the Paper);
 - account in detail for the research design, including linking of the Papers to the broader research problem and approach;
 - draw conclusions in relation to the overarching research problem or theme about its contribution to knowledge, its limitations and future development.
- b. Students could undertake a study suitable for publication as the bulk of their Year 1 Thesis (typically no more than 10,000 words) and include material which explicitly links this particular study to the overall scholarly questions of the research.

These decisions should be discussed both with the supervisor and with the Academic Coordinator of the Year 1 program who will communicate the mode of the Year 1 Thesis to the examiner.

Submission and Examination of the thesis

The Year 1 Thesis should be submitted using these [Guidelines](#) for format and process.

PhD (Integrated) students commencing in S1 2023 must submit their Year 1 Thesis electronically to Research.Coursework@vu.edu.au using the [PhD \(Integrated\) Year 1 Thesis Submission Form](#), by

- **26 October, 2023 (f/t); OR**
- **October, 2024 (p/t).**

The Year 1 thesis will be examined by:

1. The associate supervisor who has been less actively involved in the supervision of the Year 1 Thesis.
 2. All Year 1 Theses will also be moderated within ORTQI.
- The final grade – which is final - will be the average of these two marks.

NB: Unless a revise and resubmit option is offered, the examiner's results on the Year 1 Thesis will be final. There is only one possible revise and resubmit option available.

Assessing the year 1 Thesis:

Grade	Percentage	Description	Consequence
HD	80-100 %	An outstanding performance in all aspects of the research project.	No amendments
D	70-79%	An excellent performance in most aspects of the research program.	Minor amendments to be completed to supervisor's satisfaction
C Deferred	65-69%	A good performance with potential to reach 70% grade required to continue	Revise and Resubmit option available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be resubmitted within 2 weeks. Original examiner to be used where available • If 70% (max) gained > Confirmation of Candidature • If less than 70% (and 70% min average across 5 coursework units) > exit qualification • If decline exit qualification > USP
C	60-64%	A satisfactory performance in most aspects of the research program but lacking in one or more significant aspects of the research.	If 70% minimum achieved in 5 coursework units > exit qualification
P	50-59%	A marginally adequate performance in the research undertaken.	If 70% minimum achieved in 5 coursework units > exit qualification
N Deferred	45 – 49%	A largely unsatisfactory performance but demonstrating enough potential to reach a Pass grade.	Revise and resubmit option available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be resubmitted within 2 weeks • If 50% (max) gained, (and 70% min average across 5 coursework units) > exit qualification • If decline exit qualification > USP
Not Passed	0-44%	An unsatisfactory performance. Little evidence of the ability to conduct independent research. This may involve a combination of the following: lack of a thesis argument; insufficient literature; poor thesis structure; very poor expression, presentation and writing skills; lack of consistency in following the required academic conventions at the AQF 9 level	Withdraw from program

Revise and Resubmit Options:

There are two areas where a potential Revise and Resubmit option exists for the Year 1 Thesis examination which will apply *provided that the student also has a 70% min. average in the coursework*:

1. 45-49%: The student will be permitted to revise and resubmit, with the benefit of the examiners' feedback, in order to gain a maximum 50% Pass mark and be eligible for the exit qualification of UMRP Masters of Research Practice.
2. 65-69%: The student will be permitted to revise and resubmit, with the benefit of the examiners' feedback, in order to gain a maximum 70% Distinction grade enabling them to continue into Years 2-4 (see Marking Pathways for Year 1 Thesis below).

The results of a resubmitted Year 1 Thesis examination will be final:

- 70% > Proceed to year 2
- 50% > Exit Qualification
- Below 70% but decline Exit Qualification > Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings (USP)

If the student wishes to continue and the result of *either* the Year 1 Thesis or the average of the 5 coursework units is below 70%, Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings ([Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#)) may be initiated.

The examination process will be overseen by the AC as the Chief of Examiners, with the assistance of the Support Officer. Examiner nominations must be submitted by the supervisor to the [SUPPORT OFFICER](#), using the [PhD \(Integrated\) Nomination of Examiner Form](#), by

- the end of April (if the candidate is submitting in Semester 1); OR
- the end of September (if the candidate is submitting in Semester 2).

Examiners will normally provide the result within 3-4 weeks from the date when they receive the thesis using [the PhD \(Integrated\) Year 1 Thesis Examination Report form](#). If an examiner indicates that they are unable to provide a result within this period, another examiner should be sought. The Year 1 thesis is graded out of 100 at AQF level 9 using the HE grading scheme provided (see Appendix 2) and examiners provide comments which are forwarded to the candidate by ORTQI. PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers will use the feedback received from the examiner going forward to Confirmation of Candidature and in the preparation of their overall PhD thesis.

Please note that all thesis-related forms are also available from Researcher.Development@vu.edu.au.

Supervision

Two supervisors are required for all commencing HDR students. However, we assume that usually one supervisor will be more active in the supervision of the Year 1 Thesis. Unless the topic requires supervisors from complementary areas, we recommend that the prospective Associate Supervisor not be used during Year but rather be held 'in reserve' so that they are able to a) examine the Year 1 Thesis and b) actively come on board the supervision at the Confirmation of Candidature point being well-informed about the project.

The role of the Year 1 supervisor involves **regular meetings throughout the coursework units and throughout the Year 1 Thesis**, (i.e. throughout the Year 1 experience) to facilitate close supervision of the graduate researcher's program. This will include the following contacts:

1. Prior to initial unit enrolment

- The AC will recommend the 2 electives units to be taken by the student in Year 1, in addition to the 3 core units and Year 1 Thesis. This decision will be based on the proposed research and the student's background and particular learning needs. The Supervisor will be asked to confirm this selection.

2. During the first Semester (FT) or first 2 semesters (PT)

- Supervision is to continue throughout the coursework period in tandem with the coursework units in order to provide the disciplinary structure for the development of the Year 1 Thesis. In this period, supervision and coursework should operate simultaneously in a mutually beneficial manner to support the development of a viable research project in the Year 1 Thesis.
- PhD (Integrated) graduate researchers are advised to make use of the 'Getting Started' VU MyPlan questions from the Graduate Researcher Toolkit (See Appendix 1). It is recommended that supervisors use these questions as triggers in the initial conversation with the graduate researcher to draw out their background, motivation, levels of experience and likely needs for future researcher development.
- If a shell unit is selected as one of the electives, the supervisor will, in collaboration with the AC, devise the unit, oversee and assess the unit, providing the AC with a result at the end of the semester.
- Supervisor and student to discuss the graduate researcher's initial ideas for the Year 1 thesis as part of the broader plan for the full PhD project
- Because all assessments in the coursework units are designed to support the development of the Year 1 Thesis, the student should bring material and assessment tasks from the units into the context of the supervision for disciplinary guidance. This is particularly the case in UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development where the students are devising an essay to operate as a 'road map' for the Year 1 Thesis.

- Before results are returned in UGR7002, supervisors will also be sent a copy of the graduate researcher's major research essay (the Year 1 Thesis Research Proposal) for **review**, together with the UC's comments and advised grade. This is to ensure that the proposed research is viable within the discipline and from the supervisor's point of view and to provide the supervisor with the opportunity to comment before the graduate researcher receives their grade.

NB: Supervisors are enrolled into the VU Collaborate site for each of the core units UGR7001, 7002 and 7003, providing them with an additional way of following activities in the units.

3. During the second Semester (FT) or third and fourth semesters (PT)

- The supervisor will supervise the 36 credit point Year 1 Thesis Unit
- The supervisor will take responsibility for the nomination of an internal examiner (usually the Associate Supervisor).

Appendix 1: Getting Started: PhD (Integrated) VU MyPlan questions

Questions to Support a Structured Conversation at the beginning of the PhD (Integrated) Year 1

Questions for thought and discussion	Please use this column to record your own – and your supervisor’s – responses.
Describe your overall proposed PhD research project in its current iteration.	
What particularly interests you in this project? Why?	
Where do you hope this doctoral journey will take you – professionally and personally?	
<p>What do you currently see as the component parts of your planned overall PhD research project?</p> <p>research question data methodology/method(s)</p> <p>At the moment, how do you imagine that your Year 1 thesis project might fit into the overall plan for the PhD?</p>	
<p>What <i>skills</i> do you bring to your PhD? What skills do you feel that you will need to build in order to undertake your Year 1 thesis?</p> <p>NB: given the criteria for entry to the program we would expect that training in research methods and the actual conduct of a research project would feature here, but there may be other areas such as academic literacy/writing; study skills; project management etc.</p>	
<p>Do you have a sense yet of the debates and/or <i>literatures</i> which will be relevant to your project?</p> <p>a. What areas do you feel confident about because of your prior studies?</p> <p>b. In what areas do you feel you need to develop further in the first year of the PhD program? eg</p>	

Questions for thought and discussion	Please use this column to record your own – and your supervisor’s – responses.
(advanced) disciplinary knowledge in one or more relevant fields	
How are you feeling about the required coursework units? What do you hope to gain from them?	
Which electives will complement the core units best in helping you build the skills you need? When will you take them? What is your course plan for Year 1?	
How do you plan to allocate your time to progressing your Year 1 research project (if you are full-time, it is a 5 day per week commitment; if you are part-time, you will have even more to juggle...)	

Appendix 2: Australian Qualifications Framework level 9

The Thesis should also meet the requirements of [AQF 9](#) (and not 10 as required of the PhD), as per this summarised table:

AQF 9 Masters Degree (level equivalent on completion Year 1 of the PhD (Integrated))	AQF 10 Doctoral Degree
Summary	
Graduates at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for research, and/or professional practice and/or further learning.	Graduates at this level will have systematic and critical understanding of a complex field of learning and specialised research skills for the advancement of learning and/or for professional practice.
Knowledge	
Graduates at this level will have advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.	Graduates at this level will have systemic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge at the frontier of a discipline or area of professional practice.
Skills	
Graduates at this level will have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse critically, reflect on and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories • research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice • interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences 	Graduates at this level will have expert, specialised cognitive, technical and research skills in a discipline area to independently and systematically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage in critical reflection, synthesis and evaluation • develop, adapt and implement research methodologies to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice • disseminate and promote new insights to peers and the community • generate original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to a discipline or area of professional practice.
Application of knowledge and skills	
Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or scholar.

Semester 1 2023 Timetable PhD (Integrated): Year 1 Program

NB:

- commencing students will be enrolled according to **Year 1 Thesis Structure** (Int)
- **all classes will be held in person P134 Footscray Park Campus** (unless otherwise notified) and you will be sent an invitation one week prior to classes commencing; you will *not need* to allocate on MyTimetable
- you will need to complete HDR Researcher Integrity modules 1 and 3 on VU Collaborate *before* coursework commences (Researcher.development@vu.edu.au)

Unit/Event	Date	Time
Towards Confirmation Workshops (for Integrated students successfully completed Year 1 in S2 2022). Attend <i>one</i> workshop	1. 14 February 2023 2. 16 May 2023 Registrations through Researcher Development Calendar	10am - 1pm 10am - 1pm
PhD (Integrated) Program Induction (compulsory for <i>commencing</i> students only)	Monday 13 February	3-5pm
Graduate Researcher Orientation (compulsory for all commencing research students)	Friday 17 March	10am-12.30pm
UGR7001 Introduction to Research Methodology	20/2, 22/2, 27/2, 1/3, 6/3, 8/3, 13/3, 15/3	Mondays and Wednesdays 3-5.30 pm
UGR7002 Research Design and Proposal Development	20/3, 22/3, 27/3, 29/3, 3/4, 5/4, 17/4, 19/4	Mondays and Wednesdays 3-5.30 pm
UGR7003 Research Integrity and Ethics	24/4, 26/4, 1/5, 3/5, 8/5, 10/5, 15/5, 17/5	Mondays and Wednesdays 3-5.30 pm
UGR7005 Introduction to Quantitative Methodology	7/3, 14/3, 21/3, 28/3, 4/4, 18/4, 2/5, 9/5	Tuesday 2-5pm
UGR7006/UGR7007 'shell units'	Please note these units are not timetabled but will involve sessions in your supervision	
Towards Confirmation Workshops (for Integrated students who successfully complete Year 1 in S1, 2023 presenting for Confirmation in S2 2023)	3. July 2023, tbc 4. October 2023, tbc Registrations through Researcher Development Calendar	10am - 1pm

Please contact the Academic Coordinator, HDR Coursework, if you have any further queries:
Rose.Lucas@vu.edu.au