

THESIS AND EXAMINATION OF HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH POLICY 2015

The Academic Board, as delegate of the Senate of the University of Sydney, adopts the following policy.

Dated: 12 November 2014
Last amended: 9 June 2020, commencing 1 July 2020
13 November 2020 (administrative amendment)
Signature:
Position: Chair, Academic Board

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1 Name of policy

This is the Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Policy 2015.

2 Commencement

This policy commences on 1 January 2015.

3 Policy is binding

Except to the extent that a contrary intention is expressed, this policy binds the University, staff, students and affiliates.

4 Statement of intent

This policy:

- (a) describes the nature of the thesis for a higher degree by research; and
- (b) prescribes the requirements for the examination of a higher degree by research.

5 Application

- (1) This policy applies to the thesis for, and examination of, all higher degrees by research, including:
 - (a) masters degrees by research;
 - (b) the Doctor of Philosophy; and
 - (c) doctorates by research other than the Doctor of Philosophy.
- (2) This policy does not apply to higher doctorates as defined in section 5 of the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011 \(as amended\)](#).

6 Definitions and interpretation

- (1) In this policy:

AQF	means the Australian Qualifications Framework (see http://www.aqf.edu.au/)
administrative unit	means the central University administrative unit responsible for the processes of candidature management.
associate dean	means the associate dean with authority for overseeing higher degrees by research in the relevant faculty.
chair of examination	means the person appointed by the associate dean to coordinate the examination, as defined in clause 15A of this policy.
course resolutions	means resolutions made by the Academic Board in accordance with sections 2.1 and 3.1 of the University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011 (as amended) .



dean	means, as appropriate, any of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the Executive Dean and Pro Vic-Chancellor of the Faculty of Medicine and Health;• the dean of a faculty; or• the Head of School and Dean of a University school
doctorate by research	includes the PhD and all faculty doctorates and has the meaning provided in the University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011 (as amended) . At the date of this policy this is: <p>a degree with the word 'Doctor' in the title comprising a minimum of two-thirds research that is approved by the Academic Board.</p> <p>Note: The Academic Board will not approve a Doctorate by research unless it complies with the Australian Qualifications Framework at AQF level 10.</p>
examination	means the examination of a thesis as the basis for the award of a higher degree by research.
examiner	means a person appointed to examine a higher degree by research thesis.
exhibition examination	means an examination which meets the requirements of subclause 10(1)(b) of this policy.
external examiner	means a suitably qualified person who has not been either a member of staff or an affiliate of the University at any time during the period of two years prior to the proposed date of the examination.
faculty	includes references to a University school. In this policy it refers to the faculty or school in which a student is enrolled.
faculty committee	means the committee that is responsible for the examination of a higher degree by research student for the faculty in which the student is enrolled. This may be a faculty, University school or other relevant committee or board.
HDR Examinations Subcommittee	means the Higher Degree by Research Examinations Subcommittee of the Academic Quality Committee of the Academic Board. <p>Note: The terms of reference of these committees are available from here.</p>



joint PhD	<p>has the meaning given in the Dual and Joint Degree Policy 2019. At the date of this policy this is:</p> <p>means a Doctor of Philosophy degree program that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shares candidature between the University and one or more partner institutions;• produces a single thesis;• has one examination process; and• is jointly awarded by the University and the partner institution.
masters degree by research	<p>has the meaning provided in the University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011 (as amended). At the date of this policy this is:</p> <p>a degree with the word 'Master' in the title comprising a minimum of two thirds research that is approved by the Academic Board.</p> <p>Note: The Academic Board will not approve a masters degree by research unless it complies with the Australian Qualifications Framework at AQF Level 9.</p>
oral examination	<p>means an examination that meets the requirements of subclause 10(1)(a) of this policy.</p>
outcome	<p>means the outcome of an examination for a higher degree by research as defined in clause 23 of this policy.</p>
plagiarism	<p>has the meaning provided in the Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015. At the date of this policy this is</p> <p>presenting another person's work as one's own work by presenting, copying or reproducing it without appropriate acknowledgement of the source. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty.</p>
postgraduate coordinator	<p>means the academic staff member with overall responsibility for the planning and coordination of higher degree by research students within a faculty.</p> <p>Note: In the Faculty of Medicine and Health, this role is performed by the Research Education academic director.</p>
relevant committee	<p>means the committee deciding the outcome of the examination.</p> <p>Note: See subclause 23(1)</p>
school	<p>means the academic unit or disciplinary grouping (however named) within a faculty primarily responsible for the teaching and examining of higher degree by research students. If a faculty does not have an internal school structure, a reference to a school is a reference to the faculty.</p>
student	<p>has the meaning provided in the University of Sydney By-law 1999 (as amended). At the date of this policy this is:</p> <p>a person who is currently admitted to candidature in an award course at the University.</p>



submission check	means a review of a higher degree by research thesis undertaken at the point of submission by the central University administrative unit responsible for the processes of candidature management, as specified in Clause 13. Note: See also Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Procedures 2020 and Academic Honesty Procedures 2016 .
supervisor	has the meaning provided for lead supervisor in the Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy 2020 . At the date of this policy this is: in relation to a higher degree by research student, a person appointed to discharge the responsibilities set out in clauses 13 and 15 [of that policy].
thesis	means the whole of the assessable work submitted for examination. This may include previously published material, creative or artistic components, software, codes, models, and appendices.
thesis-only examination	means an examination which meets the requirements of subclause 10(1)(c) of this policy.

7 Roles of thesis and examination

- (1) The thesis is the complete body of assessable work submitted by a student for examination for a higher degree by research.
- (2) The examination of the thesis is the basis for the award of a higher degree by research (subject to the completion of coursework where required by degree resolutions).
Note: Some masters degrees by research and doctorates may include coursework requirements.
- (3) The examination determines whether a higher degree by research is awarded or not awarded.
- (4) Subject to Section 6 of the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research Rule\) 2011 \(as amended\)](#), a candidate for a higher degree by research will not be permitted to undertake a program of advanced study and research that is likely to result in the lodgement in the University Library of a thesis that cannot be made available for public use.

8 The thesis

- (1) The thesis must:
 - (a) be the student's own work;
 - (b) embody the results of the work undertaken by the student during candidature;
 - (c) form a substantially original contribution to the area of knowledge concerned;

- (d) afford evidence of originality by the:
 - (i) discovery of new knowledge; and
 - (ii) exercise of independent critical ability;
 - (e) form a cohesive and unified whole;
 - (f) include a substantial amount of material that may be suitable for publication;
 - (g) satisfactorily demonstrate that the student is able to identify, access, organise and communicate new and established knowledge;
 - (h) be written to a standard generally acceptable to the discipline; and
 - (i) be written in English except where permitted under the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research Rule\) 2011 \(as amended\)](#).
- (2) The thesis must clearly document, generally in the preface, or in the notes, or elsewhere as appropriate:
- (a) the animal and human ethics approval obtained;
 - (b) the sources from which the information in the thesis is derived;
 - (c) the nature of collaborations, or assistance, with the work described in the thesis, including:
 - (i) any assistance provided during the research phase; and
 - (ii) any editorial assistance in the writing of the thesis.
- Note:** In relation to editorial assistance see clause 5 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#)
- (3) The thesis must contain a written component generally in the form of one or more critical hypotheses that investigate the subject of the thesis in the relevant body of knowledge.
- (4) The thesis may contain:
- (a) artistic or creative works, software, computer code, or models which must be documented or recorded in a way sufficient for the purpose of assessment;
 - (b) material that has been published during candidature with the student as either sole or joint author, provided that the supervisor or corresponding author submits evidence identifying the student's contribution to the published material;
 - (c) appendices.
- (5) The role of an appendix is to provide a place for the inclusion of supplementary material that is related to the research but not directly relevant to the argument of the thesis.
- (a) Material in appendices is assessable except where written entirely by authors other than the candidate.
 - (b) Appendices may include:
 - (i) data sets; or
 - (ii) software code; or
 - (iii) examples of surveys or instruments used to gather research data; or
 - (iv) handbooks and manuals; or

- (v) publications arising from the research but not directly relevant to the arguments included in the thesis; or
 - (vi) documentary recordings of exhibitions or installations mounted during the candidature but not part of the thesis; or
 - (vii) archival and primary texts; or
 - (viii) other material as deemed necessary by the student and supervisor.
- (6) The required length of the thesis depends on the degree for which it is submitted.
- (a) For doctoral degrees:
 - (i) the total upper limit is 80,000 words which may be exceeded by no more than 20,000 words with the written permission of the Dean, Associate Dean, or the Chair of the faculty committee;
 - (ii) subject to clause 8(6)(a)(i), a shorter required length may be specified by course resolutions, or in the case of the PhD, by local provisions;
 - (iii) this word limit does not include appendices.
 - (b) For masters degrees by research:
 - (i) the total upper limit is 50,000 words which may be exceeded by no more than 10,000 words with the written permission of the Dean, Associate Dean, or the Chair of the faculty committee;
 - (ii) subject to Clause 8(6)(b)(i), a shorter required length may be specified in course resolutions;
 - (iii) the word limit does not include appendices.

9 The examination generally

- (1) The examination is an assessment of the total thesis presented.
 - (2) The examination process proceeds on the basis that:
 - (a) the thesis consists of advanced research which makes an original contribution to knowledge; and
 - (b) the awarded thesis will be lodged in the University library in electronic format.
- Note:** See also [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011](#) (as amended) and [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#).
- (3) The outcome of the examination is an academic decision by the relevant committee based on a body of evidence which includes:
 - (a) mandatory items:
 - (i) the thesis;
 - (ii) examiners' reports specified in clause 21 of this policy;
 - (iii) a recommendation from the relevant chair of examination, which is based on the examiners' reports; and
 - (iv) where applicable, any reports of investigations under the [Academic Honesty Procedures 2016](#) or its related policies;

Note: See [Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#) and [Research Code of Conduct 2019](#).

and

- (b) as deemed necessary by the relevant committee:
 - (i) reports from supervisor(s), postgraduate coordinator, head of school and the Associate Dean;
 - (ii) comments from the student; or
 - (iii) any other information deemed necessary.

Note: See also clauses 9-16 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#).

10 Mode of examination

- (1) The modes of examination are:
 - (a) an oral examination where:
 - (i) after having considered the submitted thesis, the examiners meet with the student;
 - (ii) at the examination meeting, examiners consider points of clarification of principle or detail in the thesis; and
 - (iii) examiners then assess the contribution of the student to the content and presentation of the thesis.
 - (b) an exhibition examination where:
 - (i) the student presents one or more pieces of creative art as part of the thesis, as specified in subclause 8(4)(a), in a gallery or exhibition setting to examiners; and
 - (ii) the examiners subsequently conduct an oral examination in accordance with subclause 10(2)(a)
 - (c) a thesis-only examination where:
 - (i) each of the examiners provides a detailed report on the thesis; and
 - (ii) the examination is based on these reports and the report of the chair of examination, as specified in the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Procedures 2020](#).
- (2) Students must select the mode of examination when providing their notice of intention to submit.

Note: See clause 14 of this policy.

11 Examination of joint PhD degrees

- (1) For joint PhD degrees the examination processes to be used must be specified in the individual student agreement at the beginning of the candidature.
- (2) The examination of such degrees must be conducted:
 - (a) by the University, in accordance with this policy; or
 - (b) by the partner institution, consistently with the terms of the applicable individual student agreement.

- (3) If the examination is to be conducted by the partner institution:
- (a) the proposed examination process must be approved before the agreement is executed, by one of:
 - (i) the HDR Examinations Subcommittee; or
 - (ii) the Chair of the Academic Quality Committee of the Academic Board; and
 - (b) the relevant individual student agreement should require consistency with the following clauses of this policy:
 - (i) the qualifications of examiners (clause 15)
 - (ii) the examiners' reports (clause 21); and
 - (iii) the outcome of the examination (clause 23).

Note: See also [Dual and Joint Degree Policy 2019](#) and clause 26 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#).

12 Thesis with publications

- (1) Students and supervisors may publish research findings from a research candidature whenever it is appropriate to do so and consistent with the norms of the discipline or field of research.
- (2) The award of a research degree arises from the successful examination of a thesis. Prior publication of included material is not a requirement for examination of the thesis.
 - (a) Students and supervisors must prioritise the timely submission of a thesis over manuscripts for publication.
- (3) The University will accept for examination a thesis which contains previously published material provided that:
 - (a) the thesis makes an original and substantial contribution to the field of knowledge;
 - (b) the thesis forms a consistent, coherent and unified whole;
 - (c) the previously published material relates to research undertaken during the candidature and was published during the candidature; and
 - (d) in addition to the published material, the student provides, at the minimum:
 - (i) an introduction which argues for the aim(s) of the thesis and contextualises the research problems it purports to address; and
 - (ii) a conclusion which draws together the findings of the studies in the context of the stated aims of the thesis.
- (4) The student may also provide other separate chapters to supplement the published papers such as a literature review, background information, or description of the methodology used.
- (5) Acceptable publications (including material already published, accepted for publication, or submitted for publication) include:
 - (a) papers in refereed journals;
 - (b) book chapters;

- (c) conference papers;
 - (d) a documentary record of an exhibition or installation mounted during candidature which is not part of the creative or artistic component of a thesis.
- (6) A blog is not an acceptable publication.
- (7) A collection of disparate publications, no matter what their quality, must not be approved for the award of a higher degree by research if they do not meet the criteria for the award.
- (8) A thesis containing published material must be examined using the same criteria, and by the same process, as one which does not.

13 Form of thesis for examination

- (1) The student must submit their thesis for examination as an electronic document.
- (a) A thesis in paper format may be accepted in addition to the electronic document, with the prior approval of the head of the administrative unit.
 - (b) If an examiner expresses a preference for examining a paper copy of the thesis, then this must be supplied by the administrative unit.
 - (c) The administrative unit must conduct the submission check, including applying similarity detection software and making other appropriate checks to all theses submitted for examination.
- (2) The following information must appear on the title page:
- (a) the full title of the thesis;
 - (b) the student's name;
 - (c) the words "A thesis submitted in fulfilment [or "partial fulfilment", if determined by the degree resolutions] of the requirements for the degree of [degree name, e.g. Doctor of Philosophy]";
 - (d) the faculty in which the student is enrolled;
 - (e) the name of the University of Sydney.
- (3) If a thesis includes an artistic or creative component such as an exhibition, performance, model, software or data, a documentary record of this component of sufficient quality for assessment must be included as part of the submitted thesis.
- (4) The thesis must be accompanied by an abstract in the format prescribed by the Academic Board. Some faculties may require the abstract in advance of submission of the thesis for examination.

Note: All information on thesis preparation, submission and lodgement is available through the University website. See: <http://sydney.edu.au/students/prepare-your-thesis.html> and <http://sydney.edu.au/students/thesis-submission.html>. See also clause 32 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#).

- (5) Students must submit a statement with the thesis certifying their understanding that, if their candidature is successful, their thesis will be lodged with the University Librarian and made available for immediate use.

Note: See also [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011 \(as amended\)](#) for requirements for lodging theses.

- (6) The thesis must be accompanied by a statement from the supervisor stating whether, in the supervisor's opinion, the thesis:
- (a) is sufficiently well presented to be examined; and
 - (b) does not exceed the prescribed word limit or any extended word limit for which prior approval has been granted.
- (7) If a thesis is submitted for examination without the supervisor's statement, the Associate Dean will decide whether it will be sent for examination.
- (8) The Associate Dean may decline to send a thesis to examination if:
- (a) the supervisor does not certify that it is ready for examination;
 - (b) it exceeds the prescribed word limits without prior approval to do so;
 - (c) suitable examiners, as determined by the Associate Dean, cannot be found;
 - (d) the student requests withdrawal from the examination and the Associate Dean determines there is good reason to do so;
 - (e) the student has not successfully completed required research training activities, including any required units of study;
 - (f) there is a finding of inappropriate academic practice, research misconduct or a breach of the [Research Code of Conduct 2019](#).
- Note:** See [Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#); [Research Code of Conduct 2019](#) and [Academic Honesty Procedures 2016](#)
- (g) it is not compliant with ethics approvals; or
 - (h) it breaches any of:
 - (i) the [University of Sydney \(Student Discipline\) Rule 2016](#);
 - (ii) the [Student Charter 2020](#);
 - (iii) the [Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#);
 - (iv) the [Research Data Management Policy 2014](#);
 - (v) the [Research Data Management Procedures 2015](#); or
 - (vi) any applicable faculty local provisions relating to research data management.
- (9) When the Associate Dean declines send a thesis for examination, they must:
- (a) report the circumstances and reasons for the decision to the HDR Examinations Subcommittee;
 - (b) document in writing:
 - (i) the reasons for declining to send the thesis for examination;
 - (ii) any changes necessary to make the thesis acceptable for examination; and
 - (iii) any other actions required to be completed prior to examination;
- and
- (c) decide whether the student will be permitted to re-enrol or required to show good cause.

Note: The show good cause process is specified in the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011 \(as amended\)](#) clauses 2.13, 3.13 and 4.12.

- (10) If the Associate Dean decides to permit the student to re-enrol, the student will be informed in writing of:
- (a) the reasons for declining to send the thesis for examination;
 - (b) any changes necessary to make the thesis acceptable for examination;
 - (c) any other actions required to be completed prior to examination;
 - (d) the date by which the student must re-enrol or apply for suspension of candidature.
- (11) If the Associate decides to require the student to show good cause, the student will be informed in writing of:
- (i) the reasons for declining to examine the thesis; and
 - (ii) the show cause notice in accordance with the requirements of the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011 \(as amended\)](#).

14 Notice of intention to submit

- (1) The student must provide written notice of their intention to submit a thesis for examination and should do so at least three months prior to the intended submission date.
- Note:** See clause 8 of the procedures
- Note:** See the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011 \(as amended\)](#)
- (2) Notice is required to allow sufficient time for:
- (a) the appointment of the chair of examination;
 - (b) the appointment of examiners; and
 - (c) the organisation of other examination requirements such as oral examinations, exhibitions or performances.
- (3) Late notice may delay the examination of the thesis.
- (4) At the time of providing the notice of intention to submit the student must:
- (a) certify that they have complied with:
 - (i) any ethics approvals given;
 - (ii) their research data management plan and report to their supervisor;
 - (b) select the mode of examination as required by clause 10.
- (5) The selection of mode of examination must be made in writing and endorsed by the supervisor:
- (a) if the student and the lead supervisor cannot agree on the mode of examination, the postgraduate co-ordinator will determine the appropriate mode of examination after consultation.
- Note:** See also [Research Data Management Policy 2014](#), [Research Data Management Procedures 2015](#) and any relevant faculty local provisions.
- (6) The lead supervisor should discuss with the student:
- (a) the possibility of an oral examination; and

- (b) the selection of a chair of examination and possible examiners, noting that students:
 - (i) may advise the supervisor, in writing, of the names of individuals that they consider appropriate to be appointed as examiners; and
 - (ii) may advise the supervisor, in writing, of the names of individuals that they would prefer not to be appointed as examiners; and
 - (iii) are not permitted to communicate with examiners regarding the examination during the examination.
- (7) Students may amend their intention to submit to:
 - (a) change the mode of examination; or
 - (b) change the intended submission date.

15 Proposing examiners

- (1) Examiners must:
 - (a) have international standing in the field of research;
 - (b) be independent of the conduct of the research;
 - (c) be competent to undertake the assessment; and
 - (d) not have a conflict of interest which cannot be, or is not, appropriately managed.
- (2) The lead supervisor must:
 - (a) propose examiners with sufficient international standing to evaluate the contribution of the thesis to the relevant field of research;
 - (b) only consider examiners who are:
 - (i) free from conflicts of interests; or
 - (ii) whose conflicts of interests can be effectively and appropriately managed;
 - (c) seek agreement from proposed examiners to the mode of examination; and
 - (d) propose an additional examiner to act as a reserve should any commissioned examiner need replacing.
- (3) Examiners should be active in research or scholarship. A research active examiner is understood to be someone who pursues research on an ongoing basis, as a major focus of their academic activity.
- (4) Examiners should have the following qualifications appropriate to the discipline, and as determined by the faculty committee or HDR Examinations Subcommittee:
 - (a) a qualification equivalent to the level being examined; or
 - (b) equivalent professional or research experience.
- (5) Examiners should have experience of, or be familiar with, the supervision and examination of research theses for the University or other local and international educational institutions, as determined by the faculty committee or the HDR Examinations Subcommittee.

- (6) The University should take all reasonable steps to ensure that examiners are:
 - (a) free from bias for or against the student or the supervisor; and
 - (b) free from actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interests.
 - (7) A person must not be an examiner if they:
 - (a) have been involved in the student's research;
 - (b) are a co-author on any part of the work;
 - (c) have a past or current close personal relationship with the student or supervisor;
 - (d) have had substantial contact with the student or supervisor in any other circumstances which might jeopardise the independence, or the perceived independence, of the examination;
 - (e) have been a research student of the supervisor within the last ten years; or
 - (f) have supervised the student at any time.
- Note:** See also [External Interests Policy 2010](#)
- (8) Subject to this clause 15, a person from another institution, who has held the role of supervisor for other higher degree by research students at the University of Sydney, may be appointed as an external examiner.
 - (9) Former research students of the supervisor must not be appointed as examiners for at least ten years after graduation, except with the specific approval of the Chair of the HDR Examinations Subcommittee and only in exceptional circumstances.

15A Appointment of chair of examination

- (1) The relevant Associate Dean must appoint a chair of examination to coordinate the examination.
- (2) The chair of examination will:
 - (a) be a senior academic in the school with substantial experience in higher degree by research supervision and examination. The faculty may nominate as chair of examination:
 - (i) an associate dean;
 - (ii) the postgraduate coordinator; or
 - (iii) any other relevant academic.
 - (b) have relevant experience or knowledge in the mode of examination; and
 - (c) have had no supervisory responsibility for the student's candidature.

16 Approving examiners

- (1) Nominated examiners must be approved by the chair of examination on the advice of the supervisor, then:
 - (a) for doctoral degrees, by the HDR Examinations Subcommittee;
 - (b) for masters degrees by research, by the faculty committee.

- (2) The chair of examination must make recommendations regarding the appointment of examiners, as follows:
- (a) for a doctorate by research, two examiners, both of whom must be external; and
 - (b) for a masters degrees by research, two examiners, both of whom must be external
- Note:** See [TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework](#)
- (3) The chair of examination should inform the relevant committee of any preferences regarding examiners received from the student.
- (4) Each group of examiners approved to examine a thesis should include:
- (a) no more than one from any given university or institution; and
 - (b) at least one examiner affiliated with a university or degree granting institution.
- (5) The chair of examination may recommend one or more additional individuals, who are qualified to examine, to be held in reserve and commissioned, consistently with clause 17 of this policy, as required.
- (6) Once the relevant committee has received recommendations from the chair of examination regarding the examiners it may consult with the supervisor, associate dean, head of school or postgraduate co-ordinator as required.
- (7) The relevant committee may:
- (a) approve any of the examiners as recommended; or
 - (b) approve different examiners after consultation with the:
 - (i) chair of examination;
 - (ii) lead supervisor;
 - (iii) associate dean; and
 - (iv) head of school or postgraduate co-ordinator;
- and
- (c) propose examiners at least four weeks before the submission of the thesis.
- (8) If the student does not submit the thesis for examination within three months following the approval of examiners, the administrative unit must:
- (a) request a revised submission date from the student and the supervisor; and
 - (b) write to each examiner:
 - (i) to inform them of the delay; and
 - (ii) ask if they are still willing to conduct the examination of the thesis at a future date.

17 Commissioning examiners

- (1) Once approved, examiners must be commissioned by the administrative unit in the manner provided in the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#).

Note: See Clause 10 of those procedures.

- (2) At least the minimum number of approved examiners for the degree must be commissioned.
- (3) Approved examiners who are not initially commissioned may be used at a later stage as replacement or additional examiners.
- (4) At the time of commissioning, the administrative unit must ensure that examiners are informed that:
 - (a) the contents of the thesis, including any intellectual property rights contained in the thesis, remain strictly confidential;
 - (b) the thesis can only be used for the purposes of performing the examination;
 - (c) their names may be released to the student during or after the examination; and
 - (d) their reports may be released to the student during or after the examination.

Note: Students have the right to access information about themselves, including their examinations. See the [Privacy Policy 2017](#) and the [Privacy Procedures 2018](#).

18 Approving and commissioning of additional examiners

- (1) Additional approved examiners may be commissioned to examine a thesis if:
 - (a) an original examiner is unable to examine subsequent to appointment; or
 - (b) an original examiner does not complete their examination within the required time frame

Note: see clause 20 of this policy

or

- (c) as required by the faculty committee or the HDR Examinations Subcommittee.
- (2) Any additional examiners must be approved consistently with clause 16 of this policy. This may include examiners approved, but not commissioned, at the time of submission.

19 Appointing examiner-as-assessor

- (1) Where the relevant committee is unable to form an intention regarding the award, the relevant committee may nominate an examiner-as-assessor to examine the thesis and act as an assessor of the original examiners' reports.
- (2) Previous approval as an examiner is not sufficient to act as examiner-as-assessor.
- (3) Examiners appointed as assessors must:
 - (a) be an external appointment;
 - (b) have the qualifications required in Clause 15 of the policy;

- (c) possess very high international standing in the subject of the thesis; and
- (d) be approved by the Chair of the HDR Examinations Subcommittee.

20 Replacing examiners

- (1) Replacement examiners must be commissioned when:
 - (a) a report has not been received from an original examiner within 12 weeks of the receipt of the thesis; or
 - (b) an examiner is unable to examine subsequent to appointment.
- (2) The administrative unit must:
 - (a) inform the original examiner that their services are no longer required; and
 - (b) commission a previously approved examiner; or
 - (c) request the supervisor to seek a new examiner in accordance with clause 16 of this policy.
- (3) Once commissioned, the new examiner must examine the thesis consistently with clause 9 of this policy.
- (4) If the original examiner returns a report after the replacement examiner has been sent a copy of the thesis, the original examiner's report will not form part of the body of evidence used to determine the award of the degree.

21 Examiners reports

- (1) Within six weeks of the receipt of the thesis, each examiner must:
 - (a) complete the examination; and
 - (b) submit a report to the administrative unit.
- (2) Each examiner must submit an independent report, which will remain confidential until:
 - (a) all reports have been received; or
 - (b) the Associate Dean considers that special circumstances exist which warrant its earlier release.
- (3) Examiner's reports must be in English, except where the language of the thesis is in a language other than English.

Note: See the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research Rule\) 2011 \(as amended\)](#).

- (a) If the thesis is in a language other than English, the preferred language of the examiner's report is English, but the examiner's report may be provided in the same language as the thesis.
- (b) An examiner who provides a report in a language other than English must also submit a summary of their report in English. This summary must be sufficient for:
 - (i) the relevant committee to review the examination as necessary; and
 - (ii) reviewers to understand the key aspects of the report.

- (4) Examiners' reports must
 - (a) state whether, in the opinion of the examiner, the thesis fulfils the criteria in clause 8 of this policy; and
 - (b) include any other material required by the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#)

22 Communication during examination process

- (1) Between examiners
 - (a) The names of examiners must not be disclosed to other examiners until a determination has been made about the awarding of the degree, except if required by the use of an oral or exhibition examination.
 - (b) Examiners must not correspond or communicate with other examiners regarding the examination or the thesis, except in discussion at an oral or exhibition examination.
- (2) Between examiners and students, except during an oral or exhibition examination
 - (a) The names of examiners may be disclosed to students, on request, after the thesis has been submitted for examination.
 - (b) Students, or persons acting on their behalf, must not communicate with the examiners, regarding their thesis or examination, during the examination process (i.e. from submission to award of degree).
 - (c) If a student, or a person acting on their behalf, communicates with an examiner during the examination process:
 - (i) the examination must be discontinued; and
 - (ii) a new examination process must commence with newly commissioned examiners.

Note: Breaches of the [Student Charter 2020](#) or the [University of Sydney \(Student Discipline\) Rule 2016](#) may result in disciplinary action.

- (3) Between the University and examiners
 - (a) University staff, including academic and professional staff, may contact examiners:
 - (i) to arrange for an oral or an exhibition examination ; or
 - (ii) to ascertain if progress of the report is delayed.
 - (b) If University staff, including academic and professional staff, communicate with an examiner they must not make any comment which could be seen as influencing, or having the potential to influence, the examination outcome.
 - (c) The administrative unit will inform the examiners of the outcome of the examination at the conclusion of the examination.
- (4) Between the University and the student
 - (a) Students may be provided with status updates on the examination process, at the stages specified in the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#).

Note: See clause 21 of those procedures.
 - (b) The faculty should provide the student with the names of the examiners at the conclusion of the examination process.

- (c) The administrative unit must also contact any student who is required to:
 - (i) comment on the examination; or
 - (ii) fulfil conditions related to the outcome of the examination.

23 Outcome of the examination

- (1) The outcome of the examination will be decided:
 - (a) for masters degrees, as determined by degree resolutions;
 - (b) for doctoral examinations except joint PhD examinations, where the examiners and the chair of examination all recommend that the degree be awarded by the faculty committee;
 - (c) for all other examinations by the HDR Examinations Subcommittee.
- (2) The outcome of the examination must be one of the following:
 - (a) Award without conditions: the degree can be awarded without any further action by the student.
 - (b) Award with corrections: the degree can be awarded once all required corrections to the thesis have been addressed by the student to the satisfaction of the chair of examination.
 - (c) Non-award - revision and re-examination: the degree is not awarded; and the option is provided for the student to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination subject to the following:
 - (i) the revision and re-examination process must be conducted consistently with the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020](#), and
Note: See clause 18 of those procedures.
 - (ii) no further opportunity to revise and resubmit the whole thesis may be permitted.
 - (iii) An exhibition mode examination is not permitted for the subsequent examination of a thesis after a period of revision and re-submission
 - (d) Non-award - option to award another degree: the thesis is not considered satisfactory for the award of the degree for which it was submitted, but another degree for which the student is eligible may be awarded instead.
 - (e) Non-award: the thesis is unsatisfactory for the award of the degree for which it was submitted and for another degree for which the student is eligible, and does not demonstrate sufficient potential to achieve this standard through resubmission.
- (3) The administrative unit will notify the student and supervisor when the decision has been made.
- (4) When the decision to award the degree has been made, the faculty may certify that the student is eligible to graduate subject to the student:
 - (a) fulfilling any conditions of award to the satisfaction of the chair of examination; and
 - (b) lodging a final copy of the final thesis with the University for the Library.

23A Appeals of examination decisions

Examination decisions are academic decisions, and are subject to appeal in accordance with the [University of Sydney \(Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions\) Rule 2006 \(as amended\)](#).

Note: Such appeals are described in Clauses 3.2, 4.2 and Part 5 of [University of Sydney \(Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions\) Rule 2006 \(as amended\)](#).

24 Rescissions and replacements

This document replaces the following, which are rescinded as from the date of commencement of this document:

- (1) Postgraduate: Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
- (2) Higher degree theses policy
- (3) Oral examinations of PhD Theses at the University of Sydney
- (4) PhD: Appointment of Additional Examiner as Assessor
- (5) PhD: Submission of Doctor of Philosophy Theses containing published work
- (6) Proof reading and editing of theses and dissertations
- (7) Submission of treatise containing published work

NOTES

Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Policy 2015

Date adopted:	12 November 2014
Date amended:	28 October 2015, commencing 1 January 2016
	12 April 2016
	17 August 2016, commencing 19 September 2016
	2 November 2016, commencing 16 November 2016
	31 March 2017 (administrative amendment only)
	11 May 2017 (administrative amendment only)
	28 November 2017, commencing 1 January 2018
	9 June 2020, commencing 1 July 2020
	21 July 2020 (administrative amendments)
	8 September 2020 (administrative amendment)
	13 November 2020 (administrative amendment)

Administrator:	Director, Graduate Research
Review date:	1 January 2020.
Related documents:	<p><i>University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011 (as amended)</i></p> <p><i>University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule 2016</i></p> <p><i>Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015</i></p> <p><i>Academic Honesty Procedures 2016</i></p> <p><i>Dual and Joint Degrees Policy 2019</i></p> <p><i>External Interests Policy 2010</i></p> <p><i>Honorary Titles Policy 2013</i></p> <p><i>Privacy Policy 2018</i></p> <p><i>Higher Degree by Research Supervision Policy 2020</i></p> <p><i>Higher Degree by Research Supervision Procedures 2020</i></p> <p><i>Privacy_Procedures 2019</i></p> <p><i>Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2020</i></p> <p><i>Student Charter 2020</i></p>

AMENDMENT HISTORY

Provision	Amendment	Commencing
6	Added definition of administrative unit	1 January 2016
7.2	Note amended	1 January 2016
8.3, 9.3, 10.5, 13.5, 13.6.a, 13.6.b, 7.a, 7.b, 7.c, 8, 8.b.ii, 8.b.iii, 15.5.a, 15.6.d, 15.6.e, 23.2.b, 23.2.c	Minor amendments	1 January 2016
13.1	Changes to submission requirements	1 January 2016

Provision	Amendment	Commencing
13.7.e, 13.7.f	Additional clauses	1 January 2016
15.8	Clause replaced	1 January 2016
24.2	Added Higher Degree Theses Policy which was rescinded 19 February 2015 and was inadvertently left off the original document	1 January 2016
Notes	Change to Administrator of document	1 January 2016
Notes	Updated reference and hyperlink to related document	12 April 2016
Definitions	Definitions of <i>plagiarism</i> and <i>submission check</i> added	19 September 2016
9(3)(iv)	Subclause and note added	19 September 2016
13(1)(c), 13(8)(f), 14(1)	Minor amendments	19 September 2016
13(8)(g), 13(8)(h), 14(4)	Subclauses added	19 September 2016
Notes	Change to Administrator of document	19 September 2016
Notes	<i>Academic Honesty Procedures</i> added to related documents	19 September 2016
6	Amended hyperlink in AQF, added definitions for chair of examination, HDR Examinations Sub-Committee, relevant committee, school. Removed definitions for head of department, PhD Award Sub-Committee. References to these also updated throughout the document	16 November 2016
13(9)(d)	Note deleted	16 November 2016
13(9)(e) and 13.9.f	Subclauses added	16 November 2016
14(2)(a)	Subclause added	16 November 2016
14(3)(b)	Updated reference to research data management plan	16 November 2016
15A	Clause added	16 November 2016
23(1)(a)-(c)	Subclauses added and other subclauses deleted	16 November 2016
23(2)(b)	Subclause deleted and minor amendments for clarification	16 November 2016
23(1)(b); 23(1)(c)	Minor amendment	31 March 2017
13(4) note	Updated reference to thesis lodgement and submission process	11 May 2017
15A(1); 23(3)	Minor amendments	11 May 2017
Notes	Delete reference to Final thesis submission guidelines	11 May 2017
6	Consequential amendments arising from organisational design changes	1 January 2018

Provision	Amendment	Commencing
13(9)(c)-(f); 21(2)(b)	Consequential amendments arising from the <i>University of Sydney (Delegations of Authority – Academic Functions) 2016</i>	1 January 2018
6(1)	Definitions for associate dean, dean, doctorate by research, examiner, external examiner, faculty, HDR Examinations subcommittee, joint PhD, masters by research, plagiarism, postgraduate coordinator, relevant committee, student, submission check and supervisor amended	1 July 2020
6(1)	New definitions for exhibition examination, oral examination, and thesis-only examination added	1 July 2020
6(1)	Definitions for ‘cotutelle’ and ‘internal examiner’ deleted	1 July 2020
6(2)	Deleted	1 July 2020
8(2)	Minor amendment	1 July 2020
10	Clause ‘Oral examinations’ deleted and replaced with ‘Mode of examinations’	1 July 2020
11	Clause renamed Examination of joint PhD degrees	1 July 2020
11(1)	‘cotutelle’ deleted; joint degrees replaced with joint PhD degrees	1 July 2020
11(3)(a)	Subclause amended to replace Graduate Studies Committee with Academic Quality Committee	1 July 2020
11(3)(b)(iii)	‘award’ replaced with ‘examination’	1 July 2020
12(1); 12 (2)	Subclauses added	1 July 2020
13(4)note	Minor amendment	1 July 2020
13(5)	Replace ‘Director of University Libraries’ with ‘University Librarian’	1 July 2020
13(7); 13(8); 13(8)(c); 13(8)(d); 13(9)	Replace ‘faculty committee’ with ‘Associate Dean’	1 July 2020
13(7)	Replace ‘accepted’ with ‘sent’	1 July 2020
13(8); 13(9); 13(9)(b)(i); 13(10(a))	Replace ‘examine and thesis’ with ‘send a thesis for examination’	1 July 2020
13(8)(h)	Add University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule 2016 to list of policy documents	1 July 2020
13(9)(c)	Subclause deleted; subsequent clauses renumbered	1 July 2020
13(9)(c)	Delete ‘the Associate Dean’	1 July 2020
13(9)(c) note	Note moved from 13(11)	1 July 2020
13(10); 13(11)	Minor amendments to subclauses for clarification	1 July 2020
14(1); 14(2); 14(4); 14(4)(a)	Subclauses amended for clarification	1 July 2020

Provision	Amendment	Commencing
14(3); 14(4)(b); 14(5); 14(5)(a)	New subclauses added; subsequent clauses renumbered	1 July 2020
14(6)	'lead' inserted before 'supervisor'; 'head of school and postgraduate coordinator' deleted	1 July 2020
14(7)	New subclause added	1 July 2020
15	Clause amended to read 'Proposing examiners'	1 July 2020
15(1); 15(2)	New subclauses added	1 July 2020
15(9)	Minor amendment to subclause for clarification	1 July 2020
15A(1)	Insert 'relevant' before 'Associate Dean'	1 July 2020
15A(2)	Subclauses amended for clarification	1 July 2020
16(2)(a)	Number of examiners changed from three to two	1 July 2020
16(2)(a); 16(2)(b)	'both of whom must be external' added to subclauses	1 July 2020
16(3); 16(6); 16(7)	'faculty or HDR Examinations subcommittee' replaced with 'relevant committee'	1 July 2020
16(4)(b)	Subclause deleted; subsequent subclauses renumbered	1 July 2020
16(7)(b)	Subclause amended for clarification	1 July 2020
16(7)(c)	'the supervisor should ensure that examiners are nominated' replaced with 'propose examiners'	1 July 2020
17	'of' deleted	1 July 2020
18(2)	Subclause deleted	1 July 2020
19(1)	'appoint' replaced with 'nominate'	1 July 2020
19(3)(c)	'international' inserted between 'high' and 'standing'	1 July 2020
19(3)(d)	Minor amendment for clarification	1 July 2020
20(1)	'appointed' replaced with 'commissioned'	1 July 2020
20(1)(a)	'ten weeks of the twelve' replaced with '12'	1 July 2020
20(2)	'faculty committee' replaced with 'administrative unit'	1 July 2020
20(2)(c)	'approve' replaced with "request the supervisor to seek"	1 July 2020
22(1)(a)(ii) and (ii); 22(1)(b)(i) and (ii)	Subclauses deleted	1 July 2020
22(1)(a); 22(1)(b)	'by the use of an oral or exhibition examination' added to end of subclause.	1 July 2020
22(2)	'except during an oral or exhibition examination' added to subclause	1 July 2020
22(2)(b)	'regarding their thesis or examination' inserted between 'examiners' or 'during'	1 July 2020
22(2) note	University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule 2016 added	1 July 2020
22(3)(a)(i)	'or the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis' replaced with 'or an oral or exhibition examination'	1 July 2020

Provision	Amendment	Commencing
22(3)(b)	'should' replaced with 'must'	1 July 2020
23(1)(b); 23(1)(c)	Subclauses deleted; minor amendments for clarification; cotutelle replaced with joint PhD	1 July 2020
23(2)(a)	'qualifications' replaced with 'conditions'	1 July 2020
23(2)(c)9iii)	New subclause	1 July 2020
8(2) note; 9(2) note; 9(3)(b) note; 11(3)(b) note; 17(1); 21(4)(b); 22(4)(a); 23(2)(c)(i)	Replaced Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015 with Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research 2020; and updating clause references as appropriate	1 July 2020
9(3)note; 13(8)(f) and note	Replaced Research Code of Conduct 2013 with Research Code of Conduct 2019	1 July 2020
17(4)	Replaced Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan with Privacy Policy 2017 and Privacy Procedures 2018	1 July 2020
13(8)(h)(iii); 22(2)note	Replaced Code of Conduct for students with Student Charter 2020	1 July 2020
Notes: Related documents	Updated titles and dates of internal policy documents	1 July 2020
14(5)(a)	Replace 'chair of examiner' with 'postgraduate coordinator'	21 July 2020
23(1)(a)	Replace 'faculty resolutions' with 'degree resolutions'	21 July 2020
16(2)(a); 16(2)(b)	'a minimum of' deleted	8 September 2020
23(2)(e)	'any other' deleted	13 November 2020