

# 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: 28 November 2017, commencing 1 January 2018

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](#).

## 6 Definitions and interpretation

- (1) In this policy:

<b>AQF</b>	means the Australian Qualifications Framework (see <a href="http://www.aqf.edu.au/">http://www.aqf.edu.au/</a> )
<b>administrative unit</b>	means the central University administrative unit responsible for the processes of candidature management
<b>Associate Dean</b>	means the Associate Dean of a faculty with authority for matters relating to higher degrees by research within the faculty, or the Deputy Chairperson of a Board of Studies, or a person appointed by the Dean to have authority for matters relating to higher degrees by research within the faculty.
<b>chair of examination</b>	means the person appointed by the associate dean to co-ordinate the examination, as defined in clause 15A of this policy.
<b>cotutelle agreement</b>	means an agreement between the University and another university or institution that permits joint candidature in the Doctor of Philosophy consistently with the <a href="#">Cotutelle Scheme Policy</a> .
<b>course resolutions</b>	means resolutions made by the Academic Board in accordance with sections 2.1 and 3.1 of the <a href="#">University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011</a> .
<b>Dean</b>	means the Dean of a faculty, the Head of School and Dean (University school) of a University school or the chairperson of a board of studies.

<b>doctorate by research</b>	<p>includes the PhD and all faculty doctorates and has the meaning provided in the <a href="#">University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011 (as amended)</a> which at the date of this policy is:</p> <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><b>Note:</b> The Academic Board will not approve a Doctorate by research unless it complies with the Australian Qualifications Framework at AQF level 10.</p>
<b>examination</b>	<p>means the examination of a thesis as the basis for the award of a higher degree by research.</p>
<b>examiner</b>	<p>means a person appointed to examine a higher degree by research thesis. An examiner may be an internal or an external examiner.</p>
<b>external examiner</b>	<p>means a suitably qualified person who is neither an employee or an honorary title holder (as defined by the <a href="#">Honorary Titles Policy 2013</a>) of the University. Persons who have previously been employed by the University, and who have not been involved in the candidature, may be approved as external examiners.</p>
<b>faculty</b>	<p>means the faculty or University School in which the student is enrolled.</p>
<b>faculty committee</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>HDR Examinations Sub-Committee</b>	<p>means the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Academic Board.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The terms of reference of these committees are available from the Graduate Studies Committee website.</p>
<b>internal examiner</b>	<p>means a suitably qualified person who is an employee or honorary title holder (as defined by the <a href="#">Honorary Titles Policy 2013</a>) of the University.</p>
<b>joint award</b>	<p>means an agreement between the University and another university or institution pursuant to an agreement that permits such awards.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> See also <a href="#">Cotutelle Scheme Policy</a></p>
<b>masters degree by research</b>	<p>has the meaning provided in the <a href="#">University of Sydney (Higher Degree by Research) Rule 2011</a> which at the date of this policy 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><b>Note:</b> The Academic Board will not approve a masters degree by research unless it complies with the Australian Qualifications Framework at AQF Level 9.</p>
<b>outcome</b>	<p>means the outcome of an examination for a higher degree by research as defined in clause 23 of this policy.</p>

- plagiarism** has the meaning provided in the [Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#) which at the date of this policy is 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.
- postgraduate co-ordinator** means the member of academic staff within a school with responsibility for matters relating to higher degrees by research.
- relevant committee** means the committee deciding the outcome of the examination, as defined in clause 23(1) of this policy.
- school** 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.
- student** has the meaning provided in the [University of Sydney By-law 1999 \(as amended\)](#) which at the date of this policy is:  
a person who is currently admitted to candidature in an award course at the University.
- 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 subclause 13(1).  
**Note:** See also [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Procedures 2015](#) and [Academic Honesty Procedures 2016](#).
- supervisor** has the meaning provided for co-ordinating supervisor in the [Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013](#) which at the date of this policy is:  
the research supervisor in a supervisory team who has designated academic delegations and responsibility for administrative requirements.
- 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.
- (2) Subject to the requirements of the applicable faculty constitution, an action to be undertaken by a faculty pursuant to this policy may be undertaken by a staff member, academic or professional, to whom the Dean has allocated responsibility for the relevant activity.

## 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](#), 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](#).
- (2) The thesis must 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 3 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015](#).

- (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](#) and [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures](#).

- (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 2013](#).

and

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

**Note:** See also clauses 5 – 14 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015](#).

## 10 Oral examinations

- (1) Oral examinations may be:
  - (a) recommended by the chair of examination; or
  - (b) requested by a student, except in relation to a resubmitted thesis.

**Note:** See also clauses 15 – 16 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015](#).
- (2) Oral examinations will only be undertaken if approved by the chair of examination.
- (3) Oral examinations may be conducted:
  - (a) as an integral part of the whole examination process; or
  - (b) as an in-person consultation with the student at the conclusion of the standard examination.

- (4) The purpose of an oral examination is to:
  - (a) reduce the potential length of the examination process;
  - (b) fit the convention of the discipline;
  - (c) test the student's understanding of the knowledge described within the thesis;
  - (d) clarify points of principle or detail within the thesis; or
  - (e) assess the contribution made by the student to the content and presentation of the thesis.
- (5) Oral examinations may only examine material that would be examined under a thesis-only examination i.e. the complete thesis as specified in clause 8 of this policy.

## 11 Examination of cotutelle and joint award degrees

- (1) For joint degrees, including cotutelle 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 Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Academic Board; or
    - (ii) the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee of the Graduate Studies 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 award (clause 23).

**Note:** See also [Cotutelle Scheme Policy](#) and clause 18 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015](#).

## 12 Thesis with publications

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.
- (3) 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.
- (4) A blog is not an acceptable publication.
- (5) 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.
- (6) 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 detecting 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 HDRAC / current students website. <http://sydney.edu.au/students/prepare-your-thesis.html> and <http://sydney.edu.au/students/thesis-submission.html>. See also clause 23 of the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015](#).

- (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 Director of University Libraries and made available for immediate use.

**Note:** See also [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011](#) 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 faculty committee will decide whether it will be accepted for examination.

- (8) The faculty committee may decline to examine a thesis 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 faculty committee, cannot be found;
- (d) the student requests withdrawal from the examination and the faculty committee 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 2013](#).

**Note:** See [Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#); [Research Code of Conduct 2013](#) and [Academic Honesty Procedures 2016](#)

- (g) it is not compliant with ethics approvals; or

- (h) it breaches any of:

- (i) the [Research Data Management Policy 2014](#);
- (ii) the [Research Data Management Procedures 2015](#);
- (iii) the [Code of Conduct for Students](#);
- (iv) the [Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#); or
- (v) any applicable faculty local provisions relating to research data management.

- (9) When a faculty committee declines to examine a thesis, they must:

- (a) report the circumstances and reasons for the decision to the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee;

- (b) document in writing:
  - (i) the reasons for declining to examine the thesis;
  - (ii) any changes necessary to make the thesis acceptable for examination; and
  - (iii) any other actions required to be completed prior to examination.
- (c) recommend to the Associate Dean that the student be either:
  - (i) permitted to re-enrol in order to complete the necessary actions and changes and resubmit the thesis; or
  - (ii) asked to show good cause why they should be permitted to re-enrol.
- (d) The Associate Dean will decide whether the student will be permitted to re-enrol or required to show good cause.
- (e) When the Associate Dean has made a decision in accordance with 9(d) to permit the student to re-enrol, the student will be informed of writing of:
  - (i) the reasons for declining to examine the thesis;
  - (ii) any changes necessary to make the thesis acceptable for examination;
  - (iii) any other actions required to be completed prior to examination;
  - (iv) the date by which the student must re-enrol or apply for suspension of candidature.
- (f) When the Associate Dean has made a decision in accordance with 9(d) to require the student to show cause, the student will be informed of 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*.

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

## 14 Notice of intention to submit

- (1) The student must provide written notice of their intention to submit a thesis for examination prior to the final submission date.

**Note:** See the [University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011](#)
- (2) Notice should be given at least three months prior to the intended submission date 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) The notice of intention to submit must include certification by the student that they have complied with:
  - (a) any ethics approvals given; and
  - (b) their research data management plan and report to their supervisor.

**Note:** See also [Research Data Management Policy 2014](#), [Research Data Management Procedures 2015](#) and any relevant faculty local provisions.

- (4) The supervisor, head of school, or postgraduate coordinator 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.

## 15 Qualifications of examiners

- (1) Nominated examiners must be approved by the chair of examinations on the advice of the supervisor, then:
  - (a) for doctoral degrees, by the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee;
  - (b) for masters degrees by research, by the faculty committee.
- (2) 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.
- (3) Examiners should have the following qualifications appropriate to the discipline, and as determined by the faculty committee or HDR Examinations Sub-Committee:
  - (a) a qualification equivalent to the level being examined; or
  - (b) equivalent professional or research experience.
- (4) 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 HDR Examinations Sub-Committee.
- (5) 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.
- (6) 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](#)

- (7) 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.
- (8) 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 HDR Examinations Sub-Committee and in exceptional circumstances.

### **15A Appointment of chair of examination**

- (1) The Associate Dean must appoint a chair of examination to co-ordinate the examination.
- (2) The chair of examination will:
  - (a) usually be the Associate Dean (Research Education) but could also be an experienced Head of School or Postgraduate Co-ordinator, or another academic in the school with substantial experience in HDR examinations ;
  - (b) not be a current or previous research or auxiliary supervisor of the student for the candidature;

### **16 Approving examiners**

- (1) The chair of examination must make recommendations regarding the appointment of examiners, as follows:
  - (a) for a doctorate by research, a minimum of three examiners; and
  - (b) for a masters degrees by research, a minimum of two examiners.
- (2) The chair of examination should inform the faculty committee or HDR Examinations Sub-Committee of any preferences regarding examiners received from the student.
- (3) 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; and
  - (c) no more than one internal examiner.
- (4) 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.
- (5) Once the faculty committee or HDR Examinations Sub-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.
- (6) The faculty committee or HDR Examinations Sub-Committee may:
  - (a) approve any of the examiners as recommended; or
  - (b) approve different examiners after consultation with the chair of examination, supervisor, associate dean, head of school or postgraduate co-ordinator.

- (7) The supervisor should ensure that examiners are nominated 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 of 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 2015](#).

**Note:** See Clause 6 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 2013](#) and the [Privacy Management Plan](#).

## 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 below

or

- (c) as required by the faculty committee or the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee.
- (2) An internal examiner may only replace an original internal examiner.

- (3) 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 appoint 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 standing in the subject of the thesis; and
  - (d) be approved by the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee.

## **20 Replacing examiners**

- (1) Replacement examiners must be appointed when:
  - (a) a report has not been received from an original examiner within ten weeks of the twelve weeks of the receipt of the thesis; or
  - (b) an examiner is unable to examine subsequent to appointment.
- (2) The faculty committee must:
  - (a) inform the original examiner that their services are no longer required; and
  - (b) commission a previously approved examiner; or
  - (c) approve 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](#).

- (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 2015](#).

## 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:
- (i) by the use of an oral examination; or
  - (ii) during the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis.
- (b) Examiners must not correspond or communicate with other examiners regarding the examination or the thesis, except in discussion:
- (i) at an oral examination; or
  - (ii) at the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis.
- (2) Between examiners and students
- (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 [Code of Conduct for Students](#) 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 examination or the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis; 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 should 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 2015](#).  
**Note:** See clause 15 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 faculty resolutions.
  - (b) by the faculty committee for examinations, except cotutelle examinations, where the examiners and the chair of examinations all recommend that the degree be awarded.
  - (c) by the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee for all other examinations, including all cotutelle examinations.
- (2) The outcome of the examination must be one of the following:
  - (a) Award without qualification: 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 2015](#), and  
**Note:** See clause 14 of those procedures.
    - (ii) no further opportunity to revise and resubmit the whole thesis may be permitted.

- (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 any other 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

<b>Date adopted:</b>	12 November 2014
<b>Date amended:</b>	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
<b>Administrator:</b>	Director, Graduate Research
<b>Review date:</b>	1 January 2020.
<b>Related documents:</b>	

[University of Sydney \(Higher Degree by Research\) Rule 2011](#)

[Academic Honesty in Coursework Policy 2015](#)

[Academic Honesty Procedures 2016](#)

[Cotutelle Scheme Policy](#)

[External Interests Policy 2010](#)

[Honorary Titles Policy 2013](#)

[Privacy Policy 2013](#)

[Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013](#)

[Privacy Management Plan 2013](#)

[Thesis and Examination of Higher Degrees by Research Procedures 2015.](#)

## 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
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

<b>Provision</b>	<b>Amendment</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
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
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