Higher Degree by Research Examination Guideline

Section 1 - Including Scholarly Works in the Thesis

(1) As part of the thesis, a candidate may submit work that has been published or accepted for publication or manuscripts submitted for publication that contribute directly to their argument and supports their findings.

(2) The scope and quality of each scholarly work in the thesis must be commensurate with the contribution to knowledge expected of a PhD or MPhil candidate.

(3) Research contributing to scholarly work that is included in the thesis must have been conducted during candidature.

(4) Works published prior to candidature cannot be included in the thesis.

(5) The candidate must make a substantial contribution to each of the following activities related to each scholarly work:

a. conception and design of the project associated with the scholarly work and its components;
b. analysis and interpretation of the research data on which the scholarly work is based; and
c. drafting and production of significant parts of each scholarly work included in the thesis.

(6) The candidate must have participated sufficiently to take public responsibility for each scholarly work appearing in the thesis and a clear statement of authorship and contribution to each scholarly work must be provided in the preliminary pages of the thesis.

(7) All authors must agree to the scholarly work appearing in the thesis.

(8) The presence of peer-reviewed published works within the thesis does not pre-empt or negate the assessment of the examiners regarding the quality of this work within the thesis nor does it preclude amendments to the thesis based on examiners recommendations.

(9) All candidates commencing from 1 January 2017 who include scholarly works in the thesis will undertake an Oral thesis examination.

(10) All theses that include publications must be formatted according to the requirements outlined in the Higher Degree by Research Examination Policy.

a. The accepted author manuscript must be included in the thesis.
b. Peer reviewed papers may be incorporated if the papers contribute to the argument of the thesis.
c. At a minimum any thesis including publications must contain:
    i. an independent introduction that contextualises the research project in relation to the present state of the knowledge in the field;
    ii. thesis chapters in a logical and coherent sequence leading to an argument that supports the main findings of the thesis;
    iii. an independent and original discussion that integrates the significant findings of the thesis.

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d. Permission must be obtained to reproduce copyright material in the thesis unless as part of the publication process permission has already been granted. A statement attesting to copyright permission must be explicitly included in the thesis.
e. Thesis examiners may request amendments to those parts of the thesis that derive from published papers. Prior publication is not an academically acceptable defence for not incorporating amendments into the final version of the thesis.

Section 2 - Additional Formats for a HDR Thesis

(11) For an individual candidate (or an Academic Organisational Unit) to obtain approval to submit a thesis in an alternative format, the request must include the following:

a. Outline the proposed thesis format and the academic grounds for using that format, including how it would better articulate the outcomes of the project.
b. Demonstrate that the proposal is appropriate for the HDR program, can support a timely completion with the resources available (including advisory expertise and support), and will result in a thesis that can be examined.
c. If appropriate, demonstrate that the reasons for submitting material written in a language other than English in the thesis are academically appropriate (for example, that presenting the material in English would compromise the argument of the thesis) and related to the research topic, and not a consideration made based on the candidate's English language proficiency.
d. An endorsement by the advisory team and Head of the Academic Organisational Unit (AOU) for approval by the Dean, Graduate Research School. The Head of the AOU may also seek approval for this format to be used broadly for other candidates in the discipline if appropriate.

Section 3 - Submission for Examination

(12) The following requirements must be met for thesis submission:

a. an indication if embargo is required;
b. the thesis has been submitted to iThenticate and the Principal Advisor has sighted this and verified that the thesis is ready to be examined;
c. the thesis and abstract must be in PDF format, supplementary audio files are to be in MP3 format;
d. supplementary video files are to be in WMV or AVI format;
e. all documents uploaded to the UQ eSpace must not be password protected, all fields in the UQ eSpace must be completed when uploading documents, all documents must be attached to a singular UQ eSpace record;
f. PDF files must be saved using the following naming structure: (student number), (degree type), (stage of examination). Stages of examination are: "submission", or "correctedthesis", or "finalthesis".

Section 4 - Conflict of Interest

(13) The Graduate Research School ensures that all thesis examiners act with integrity. All Conflicts of Interest (COI) are declared so that a thesis may be assessed free from any perception of bias or preferential treatment. UQ's COI guidelines are informed by those of the Australian Council of Graduate Research.

(14) Relationships that would normally exclude a potential examiner include:

a. Working

i. Examiner is in negotiation to directly employ or be employed by the candidate or Advisor.
ii. Examiner was a candidate of the Advisor within the past 5 years.
iii. Examiner has directly employed or been employed by the Advisor or candidate within the past 5 years.

b. Personal/Legal
   i. Examiner is legally family or known relative to the Advisor, or candidate is a legal guardian or has power of attorney for the Advisor or candidate.

c. Other
   i. Examiner has a formal grievance with UQ.
   ii. Examiner is a current academic staff member at UQ or has a current Honorary, Adjunct or Emeritus position or is an academic title holder (Medicine) with UQ.

(15) Working relationships with the examiner are to be declared on the Nomination of Thesis Examiners request form. Working relationships which may lead to exclusion as an examiner include:

a. Examiner has co-authored a paper with the candidate or Advisor within the last 5 years.
b. Examiner has worked with the candidate on matters regarding the thesis, e.g. previous member of the advisory team.
c. Examiner has employed the candidate or Advisor or been employed by the candidate or Advisor within the last 5 years.
d. Examiner has acted as a referee for the candidate or Advisor for employment.
e. Examiner has co-supervised with the Advisor in the past 5 years.
f. Examiner holds a patent with the Advisor granted no more than 8 years ago and which is still in force.
g. Examiner holds a current grant with the Advisor.

(16) The examples provided above are indicative and are not considered exhaustive.

Section 5 - Oral Examination

(17) The main objectives of the oral examination are to:

a. establish that the candidate fully understands the work and its wider implications;
b. provide the candidate with an opportunity to reply to criticism or challenge;
c. enable the examiners to clarify issues in the thesis which may be unclear;
d. help the examiners to decide on the nature and extent of any corrections or revisions which may be required;
e. provide the examiners with an opportunity to clearly communicate required corrections or revisions to the candidate; and
f. authenticate the contribution made by the candidate to the thesis and ensure that the candidate has a clear understanding of the contribution of collaborators to the thesis.

(18) The oral examination will include assessment of the candidate's ability to:

a. demonstrate detailed knowledge of the thesis;
b. locate their research in the broader context of their discipline;
c. demonstrate the originality of the thesis and the contribution it makes to state of knowledge in the field;
d. defend the methodology and conclusions of the thesis; and
e. display awareness of the limitations of the thesis.

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(19) Examiners are invited to examine the thesis in the knowledge that an oral examination will be held as part of the examination process. Examiners are requested to provide a full written report and a recommendation on the thesis outcome for consideration by the Dean, Graduate Research School within 6 weeks of thesis submission.

(20) The oral examination should be scheduled approximately 8 weeks after the date of thesis submission.

(21) Examiners' reports and summary recommendation are submitted directly to the Graduate Research School.

(22) Once both reports have been received by the Graduate Research School, they will be forwarded to the Chair of Examiners.

(23) The Chair of Examiners will distribute the examiners' reports to the members of the oral examination panel and the Principal Advisor. The Chair of Examiners will consult with the candidate to discuss the examiners' reports after which the reports will be provided to the candidate.

(24) The candidate should receive the examiners' reports at least 1 week prior to the oral examination. If this is not possible then the oral examination may be postponed.

(25) The candidate will provide a seminar on their thesis work to the examination panel, typically no more than 30 minutes in duration.

(26) At the conclusion of the seminar, the candidate and the oral examination panel conduct a closed interview during which time the panel discusses the thesis with the candidate.

(27) At the conclusion of the interview with the candidate, the panel will meet in the absence of the candidate to discuss the outcome and produce a written report that should be submitted to the Dean, Graduate Research School within two business days. This report will contain a recommendation on the outcome of the oral examination and will delineate any changes required to be made to the thesis before the conferral of the degree. If the comments are substantially different from the written reports of the examiners then a justification of these differences must be included in the report.

(28) The panel may advise the candidate of their recommendation. However, the determination of outcome remains with the Dean, Graduate Research School, who will consider the examiners' written reports together with the report from the oral examination panel.

Section 6 - Chair of Examiners

(29) The Chair of Examiners:

a. is nominated for each HDR candidate whose thesis is submitted for examination;
b. is identified at the thesis review milestone;
c. is an academic staff member of UQ;
d. is a member of UQ's Principal Advisor Registry;
e. must hold a degree of a level equivalent to or greater than the one the thesis is being examined for;
f. must be familiar with the research discipline represented in the candidate's thesis, or in the case of multi-disciplinary theses, be familiar with part of the research discipline represented by the thesis; and
g. must not be a current or former member of the advisor team.

(30) Duties of the Chair of Examiners include:

a. conduct the oral examination meeting;

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b. coordinate the oral examination committee report;
c. review and determine the adequacy of the response of the candidate to the examiner(s) comments and recommendations; and
d. provide specific academic advice to the Dean, Graduate Research School on an examiner(s)' recommendation when requested. This may occur when the examiners' recommendations are highly divergent or when there is a recommendation of revise and resubmit. The Chair of Examiners is expected to confer with the candidate's advisory team and must confine his/her comments to the matters raised in the examiner(s)' reports.

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Status and Details

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