

Appointment of Examiners and Examination Procedure

Section 1 - Governing Policy

(1) These Procedures are governed by the [Appointment of Examiners and Examination Policy](#).

Section 2 - Scope/Application

(2) These Procedures are applicable to:

- a. all candidates who are enrolled in a Higher Degree Research (HDR) program at ACU
- b. supervisors of HDR candidates enrolled at ACU
- c. all ACU staff involved with or supporting the HDR Examination process; and
- d. all examiners of HDR theses.

(3) Candidates who are enrolled in a Cotutelle or Double-badged degree should refer to the [Joint \(Cotutelle\) Doctoral Enrolment Policy](#).

Section 3 - Appointment of Examiners (AOE) for a Higher Degree Research Thesis

(4) The Principal Supervisor must commence the AOE process once a candidate has successfully completed their Final Year Review (FYR).

(5) The identity of the examiners will remain confidential unless the examiners agree, at the conclusion of the examination process, to the release of their identity to the candidate as indicated on the Examiner's Summary Report.

(6) For all research higher degrees, the Principal Supervisor will nominate at least three people who have agreed, in principle, to serve as examiners.

(7) For a research doctorate thesis, at least one Examiner will be International.

(8) Supervisors, including Associate Supervisors, are not permitted to examine their candidate's thesis.

(9) All examiners will be free of potential conflict of interest. That is, they will not have:

- a. any current or previous involvement in the candidate's research; or
- b. been a co-author on any part of the work; or
- c. a substantial publication history with the supervisors; or
- d. a close personal relationship with the candidate or supervisors; or
- e. any substantial contact with the candidate or supervisor that would jeopardise the examination process.

(10) A candidate must be given an opportunity by the Principal Supervisor to discuss the suitability of potential examiners. A candidate may neither demand nor reject the appointment of any particular examiner, though may offer reasons for inclusion or exclusion of potential examiners for consideration by the Supervisor.

(11) The Principal Supervisor must submit examiner nominations to the ADR and include all of the below:

- a. A completed Appointment of Examiners form, listing nominees in order of preference; and
- b. a complete list of each nominee's publications from the preceding 5 years; and
- c. the candidate's completed Thesis Summary form.

(12) The Faculty Associate Dean, Research (ADR) will review and check the Principal Supervisor's nominations and supporting documentation and either endorse the nominations or decline to endorse the nominations.

(13) If the ADR declines to endorse the documentation, the ADR will return to Principal Supervisor for updating and resubmission.

(14) If the ADR endorses the nominations, the ADR will add their comments and signature to the Appointment of Examiners form and submit all documentation to the Graduate Research School.

(15) The Graduate Research School will submit all completed documentation to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) (PVCR) for consideration.

(16) The PVCR will review the documentation and advise the Graduate Research School of the outcome.

(17) If the PVCR approves all three nominees as suitable, the Graduate Research School will issue formal invitations to preferred examiners one and two; examiner three will be held in reserve.

(18) If the PVCR declines to approve one or more of the nominees, the Graduate Research School will inform the ADR.

(19) The ADR will, as appropriate, seek alternate nominees or further information supporting existing nominees from the Principal Supervisor.

(20) If approved nominees fail to respond to, or decline ACU's invitation to examine, the Graduate Research School will inform the ADR that alternate nominees are required. Refer to clauses (5) to (18) of this Procedure for nomination procedure.

(21) Principal Supervisors must endeavour to have nominated suitable examiners prior to the candidate's thesis submission date. Delays in the identification and approval of suitable examiners will result in delays in the examination process.

(22) The Graduate Research School will record outcomes and documentation related to the Appointment of Examiners of a Higher Degree Research Thesis as stipulated in the [Records and Archive Management Policy](#).

(23) The Graduate Research School will report the outcome of the Appointment of Examiners process to each meeting of the University Research Committee (URC).

Section 4 - Submission of a Higher Degree Research Thesis for Examination

(24) A candidate's thesis must comply with the [Preparation and Presentation of a Higher Degree Research Thesis for Examination Guideline](#).

(25) A candidate's thesis must be submitted by their thesis submission deadline.

(26) To request endorsement, candidates must provide the ADR with:

- a. a Certificate from the Supervisors signed by the candidate and the supervisors; and
- b. an electronic copy of their thesis for examination;
- c. any other Project Materials for PhD by Creative Project; and
- d. an iThenticate report.

(27) Following ADR endorsement, the candidate must ensure the following are provided to the Graduate Research School:

- a. the electronic copy of the candidate's thesis for examination; and
- b. the signed Certificate from the Supervisors; and if appropriate
- c. any other Project Materials for PhD by Creative Project.

(28) The Graduate Research School will inform the candidate that the examination process has commenced by completing and sending the Thesis Examination Process notification.

(29) The Graduate Research School will record documentation associated with the submission of a Higher Degree Research Thesis for Examination as stipulated in the [Records and Archive Management Policy](#).

Section 5 - Examination of a Higher Degree Research Thesis

Sending the Thesis to Examiners

(30) The Graduate Research School will confirm procedures have been completed, as per clauses (4) to (29) of this Procedure.

(31) The Graduate Research School will email an electronic copy of the thesis to the two endorsed examiners. If an examiner requests a hard-copy of the thesis, the Graduate Research School will inform the candidate and the candidate must provide this to the Graduate Research School. The Graduate Research School sends the hard-copy to the examiner.

(32) The Graduate Research School will request examiners return their recommended examination outcome along with a report within 4-6 weeks for a masters-by-research thesis; or within 6-8 weeks for a doctoral thesis. Examination Outcomes are outlined in the [Appointment of Examiners and Examination Policy](#).

(33) The Graduate Research School will facilitate receipt of examiners' reports within the timeframe outlined in clause (32) of this Procedure.

(34) If any examiner returns an outcome of defer, fail or award minor degree, the Graduate Research School will invite the third endorsed nominee to examine the thesis.

(35) The Graduate Research School will inform the ADR if a reserve nominee has not been endorsed as per clauses (4) to (23) of this Procedure, or if an endorsed reserve nominee is unavailable or unresponsive to the invitation to examine.

(36) The ADR will request alternate suitable nominations from the Principal Supervisor as required and as per clauses (4) to (23) of this Procedure.

Processing Examiners' Reports

(37) The Graduate Research School will receive and de-identify examiners' reports in accordance with clause (5) of this Procedure.

(38) The Graduate Research School will provide collated, de-identified examiners' reports to the Faculty ADR along with the ADR Report on Thesis Examination form.

(39) The Faculty ADR, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, will review the examiners' reports and complete the ADR Report on Thesis Examination.

(40) The Faculty ADR will return the ADR Report on Thesis Examination and any supporting documentation to the Graduate Research School for PVCR review.

(41) Candidature Services will provide the PVCR for review:

- a. The de-identified examiners' reports; and
- b. the completed ADR Report on Thesis Examination; and
- c. any supporting documentation such as suggested amendments.

(42) The PVCR will review the documentation and either adopt an examination outcome or refer the matter to the URC for decision.

(43) If the Faculty ADR recommendation is 'Pass', Pass (Summa Cum Laude)' or 'Pass with amendments', the PVCR will either:

- a. adopt an examination outcome of 'Pass', 'Pass (Summa Cum Laude)' or 'Pass with amendments'; or
- b. recommend the matter to the URC for decision.

(44) If the Faculty ADR recommendation is 'Defer', 'Award Minor Degree' or 'Fail', the PVCR must review the documentation and make a recommendation to be considered by the URC. The URC makes the final decision on the examination outcome.

(45) The PVCR will inform the Graduate Research School of examination outcomes adopted under clause (43) of this Procedure, and the Graduate Research School will undertake notifications as outlined in clauses (50) to (96) of this Procedure.

(46) The PVCR will inform the Graduate Research School of examination outcomes to be submitted to the URC for decision under clauses (43) and (44) of this Procedure.

(47) The Graduate Research School will collate and submit documentation at the subsequent meeting of the URC for examination outcomes to be decided by the URC. Documentation will include at a minimum:

- a. the de-identified examiners' reports; and
- b. the ADR Report on Thesis Examination, including any supporting documentation; and
- c. the PVCR's recommendation.

(48) A representative from the Graduate Research School will attend each URC meeting, note any examination outcomes resolved and undertake notifications as specified in clauses (50) to (96) of this Procedure.

(49) The Graduate Research School will record documentation associated with the Examination of a Higher Degree Research Thesis as stipulated in the [Records and Archive Management Policy](#).

Section 6 - Notification of Higher Degree Research Thesis Examination Outcomes

An outcome of 'Pass' or 'Pass (Summa Cum Laude)

(50) The Graduate Research School will notify the candidate directly of the examination outcome by sending:

- a. the examination outcome memo;
- b. the de-identified examiners' reports;
- c. the completed ADR Report on Thesis Examination; and
- d. instructions to submit documentation for course completion and graduation processing.

An outcome of 'Pass with Amendments'

(51) Candidature Services will notify the Principal Supervisor of the examination outcome by sending:

- a. the examination outcome memo;
- b. the de-identified examiners' reports;
- c. the completed ADR Report on Thesis Examination with any supporting documentation;
- d. the table or list of required amendments;
- e. the Confirmation of Amendments memo for completion; and
- f. the Thesis Amendments Summary for completion.

(52) The Principal Supervisor will notify the candidate of the result and provide the candidate with the examination outcome documentation as received from the Graduate Research School.

(53) A candidate who receives an outcome of Pass with amendments must complete and submit all revisions to the thesis:

- a. as detailed in the table or list of amendments required; and
- b. within the timeframe specified in the examination outcome notification

(54) A candidate must submit to their Principal Supervisor for verification:

- a. an electronic copy of the whole thesis, with amendments clearly tracked as changes;
- b. the completed table or list of required amendments which:
 - i. clearly identifies all amendments required as per the examination outcome clause (51) of this Procedure, and
 - ii. clearly identifies all page numbers within the thesis where amendments have been made; and
 - iii. clearly details or provides an excerpt of each amendment(s) made;
- c. a Confirmation of Amendments memo with candidate signature; and
- d. a completed Thesis Amendments Summary.

(55) The Principal Supervisor must verify the amendments have been completed and submit the following to the ADR for endorsement:

- a. the electronic copy of the whole thesis, with amendments clearly tracked as changes;
- b. the table or list of required amendments;

- c. the completed Thesis Amendments Summary; and
- d. the Confirmation of Amendments memo with Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor signatures added.

(56) The ADR will review the documentation and either endorse the amendments or decline to endorse the amendments.

(57) If the ADR declines to endorse the amendments, the ADR will inform the Principal Supervisor that the amendments are not endorsed. The Principal Supervisor will inform the candidate that the amendments are not endorsed, and the candidate must make the amendments required. Refer to clause (53) and onwards of this Procedure for procedure to submit amendments.

(58) If the ADR endorses the amendments, the ADR will submit the following to the Graduate Research School for PVCR review:

- a. the electronic copy of the whole thesis, with amendments clearly tracked as changes;
- b. the table or list of required amendments;
- c. the completed Thesis Amendments Summary; and
- d. the Confirmation of Amendments memo with ADR signature added

(59) The Graduate Research School will submit the documentation received from the ADR to the PVCR for approval of thesis amendments.

(60) If the PVCR approves the amendments, the Graduate Research School will instruct the candidate to submit documentation for course completion and graduation processing.

(61) If the PVCR declines to approve the amendments, the Graduate Research School will inform the ADR, who will advise the Principal Supervisor. The Principal Supervisor will inform the candidate that the amendments are not approved, and the candidate must make the amendments required. Refer to clause (53) onwards of this Procedure.

(62) A candidate who does not receive approval of their amendments within the timeframe specified in their examination outcome notification, has not completed the examination process and may have their enrolment cancelled.

(63) A candidate who has not completed the examination process is not eligible to re-submit for examination.

An Outcome of Defer

(64) The Graduate Research School will notify the candidate directly by sending:

- a. the examination outcome memo;
- b. the de-identified examiners' reports; and
- c. the completed ADR Report on Thesis Examination with any supporting documentation.

(65) The Graduate Research School will re-activate the candidate's enrolment in the HDR Program.

(66) A candidate who is not in receipt of an approved Research Training Program Fees Offset Scholarship or ACU Tuition Fee Waiver, may be required to pay enrolment fees.

(67) A candidates must refer to the examination outcome memo and ADR Report on Thesis Examination for details of the required changes to the thesis.

(68) A candidate who receives an outcome of defer will have 12 months (Full Time Equivalent) to submit their thesis for re-examination. The re-submission due date is stipulated in their examination outcome memo. Refer to clauses

(24) to (29) of this Procedure.

Nomination of Examiners for a Thesis Re-submitted Following an Outcome of Defer

(69) Principal Supervisors must nominate two people to re-examine the thesis.

(70) Examiners of the re-submitted thesis may be either:

- a. two original Examiners, if they indicated that they were willing to be involved in the re-examination process; or
- b. two new Examiners (new examiners must be nominated and approved via the process outlined in clauses (4) to (23)).

(71) A candidate who fails to re-submit their thesis for examination by the re-submission due date, has not completed the examination process and may have their enrolment cancelled.

(72) A candidate who has not completed the examination process is not eligible to re-submit for examination.

Re-examination Process for a Thesis Submitted Following an Outcome of Defer

(73) The Graduate Research School will email the following to the two endorsed examiners.

- a. an electronic copy of the submitted thesis for re-examination; and
- b. the examiner proforma for a thesis re-examined following a defer outcome.

(74) Candidature Services will request examiners return their recommended examination outcome along with a report within 4-6 weeks for a masters-by-research thesis; or within 6-8 weeks for a doctoral thesis.

(75) Examiners may recommend an examination outcome of 'Pass' or 'Fail' only.

(76) The Graduate Research School will facilitate receipt of examiners' reports within the timeframe outlined in clause (74) of this Procedure.

(77) The Graduate Research School will collate and de-identify the examiners' reports in accordance with clause (5) of this Procedure.

(78) The Graduate Research School will provide collated, de-identified examiners' reports to the Faculty ADR along with the ADR Re-Examination of Thesis Report.

(79) The Faculty ADR, in consultation with the Principal Supervisor, will review the examiners' reports and complete the ADR Re-examination of Thesis Report and recommend an examination outcome of either:

- a. Pass or
- b. Fail

(80) The Faculty ADR will return the ADR Re-examination of Thesis Report and any supporting documentation to the Graduate Research School for PVCR review.

(81) The Graduate Research School will provide the PVCR for review:

- a. The de-identified examiners' reports; and
- b. the completed ADR Re-examination of Thesis Report; and
- c. any supporting documentation.

(82) The PVCR will review the examiners' reports and the ADR Re-examination of Thesis Report and recommend an examination outcome of either:

- a. Pass or
- b. Fail

(83) The Graduate Research School will submit the PVCR's recommendation, the completed ADR Re-examination of Thesis Report and the de-identified documentation to the next meeting of the URC for adoption of a final examination outcome of Pass or Fail.

(84) If the URC adopts a resolution of 'Pass', the Graduate Research School will:

- a. Inform the candidate directly through an examination outcome memo;
- b. send the candidate the de-identified examiners' reports; and
- c. instruct the candidate to submit documentation for course completion and graduation processing.

(85) If the URC adopts a resolution of 'Fail', the Graduate Research School will:

- a. inform the candidate directly of the examination outcome;
- b. send the candidate the de-identified examiners' reports; and
- c. record a grade of fail ungraded (NU) and process course completion.

(86) A candidate who receives a final examination outcome of 'Fail' is considered to have completed the examination process and is not eligible to re-submit for examination at ACU or another institution.

An Outcome of Award Minor Degree

(87) The URC may resolve to award candidates a minor degree if their thesis fails to meet the requirements of a doctoral thesis.

(88) The URC may award a Doctor of Philosophy candidate the minor degree of Master of Philosophy.

(89) The URC may award a Doctor of Education candidate the minor degree of Master of Education (Research)

(90) If the URC resolves to Award Minor Degree, the Graduate Research School will:

- a. notify the candidate of the examination outcome;
- b. send the candidate the de-identified examiners' reports; and
- c. instruct the candidate to submit documentation for course completion and graduation in the minor degree.

(91) A candidate who is awarded a minor degree is not eligible to re-submit their thesis for examination.

(92) A candidate who does not submit their documentation for course completion and graduation in the minor degree has not completed the examination process and may have their enrolment cancelled.

An Outcome of Fail

(93) The URC may adopt an examination outcome of 'Fail'.

(94) If the URC adopts a resolution of 'Fail', the Graduate Research School will:

- a. inform the candidate directly of the examination outcome;

- b. send the candidate the de-identified examiners' reports and the ADR Report on Thesis Examination; and
- c. record a grade of fail ungraded (NU) and process course completion.

(95) A candidate who receives an examination outcome of 'Fail' is considered to have completed the examination process and is not eligible to re-submit their thesis for examination.

(96) The Graduate Research School will record documentation associated with a Notification of Higher Degree Research Thesis Examination Outcome as stipulated in the [Records and Archive Management Policy](#).

Section 7 - Completion of the Higher Degree Research Examination Process

Submission of final copy of the thesis to the University.

(97) Upon receipt of the instruction to submit documentation for course completion and graduation processing, the candidate must:

- a. deposit in the [ACU Research Bank](#):
 - i. their final approved thesis; and
 - ii. the Layperson's Summary form which has been signed by both the candidate and the Principal Supervisor.
- b. if appropriate, submit to the Graduate Research School any additional materials for a PhD by Creative Project

(98) Following the candidate's completion of step at clause (98)a. of this Procedure, the Library Repository Editor will review the information the candidate has provided in the [ACU Research Bank](#).

(99) If the candidate has submitted all the required information in the [ACU Research Bank](#) and has selected thesis file access level 'open', the Library Repository Editor will proceed to publish the thesis.

(100) If the candidate has not submitted all required information, the Library Repository Editor will return the form to the candidate for completion.

(101) If the candidate has selected a thesis file access level other than 'open', the Library Repository Editor will contact the candidate to ascertain if the candidate is requesting an embargo.

(102) If the candidate requests an embargo, the Library Repository Editor will inform the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (ODVCRE). The ODVCRE will facilitate the DVCRE's consideration of the request and will inform the Library Repository Editor and the candidate of the decision.

(103) Following completion of the steps in clauses (97) to (102) of this Procedure, the Library Repository Editor will notify the Graduate Research School and the Faculty ADR, of the deposit and provide an e-copy of the signed Layperson's Summary form.

(104) Upon receiving the Layperson's Summary form from the Library Repository Editor, the Graduate Research School will complete the graduation memo and submit the required documentation to course completions.

(105) A candidate is only deemed to have completed the examination process when they have:

- a. complied with all requirements of their examination outcome notification as detailed in clauses (50) to (96) of this Procedure; and
- b. submitted documentation for course completion and graduation processing as detailed in clauses (97) to (102) of this Procedure; and

- c. when the Graduate Research School has submitted the signed gradation memo to course completions.

(106) A candidate must satisfy all requirements approximately three months in advance of the expected conferral deadline of graduation ceremony. If the deadline is not met, the candidate will be automatically placed in the subsequent conferral. Please check with the Graduate Research School at Grad.Research@acu.edu.au for specific deadlines.

(107) The Graduate Research School will provide a summary of Thesis Examination Outcomes to each meeting of the URC.

Section 8 - Further Assistance

(108) Any questions relating to the Procedure as outlined in this document, can be directed to:

- a. Your Principal Supervisor
- b. The Faculty Office:
 - i. Faculty of Education and Arts FEA.HDR@acu.edu.au
 - ii. Faculty of Health Sciences FHS.ADR@acu.edu.au
 - iii. Faculty of Law and Business LawBusinessResearch@acu.edu.au
 - iv. Faculty of Theology and Philosophy ADRes.FTP@acu.edu.au
- c. The Graduate Research School Grad.Research@acu.edu.au.

Section 9 - Review

(109) Unless otherwise indicated, this Procedure will still apply beyond the review date.

Section 10 - Associated Information

(110) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th December 2023
Review Date	1st August 2024
Approval Authority	
Approval Date	19th December 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Abid Khan Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Responsible Manager	Michelle Lopez Director, Graduate Research School
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