1 Higher Degree Statutes and Rules

The specific legislation and rules relating to higher degrees are prescribed in Statutes and Rules. The relevant Statutes and Rules can be found at:

- Doctoral Statute
- Masters Statute:
- Course Rules for Doctorates and Masters

A higher degree thesis shall incorporate an account of research done during the period of candidature. It should deal in a unified and thorough way with a particular topic and should be written in accordance with accepted standards of scholarship, style and presentation. It should furnish evidence of wide reading and the power to integrate information obtained from various sources into a unified whole.

1.1 Masters Degrees by Research

These degrees generally have the objective of training students in research techniques, and in critical evaluation of such methodology appropriate to their field of study, and in the application of such methodology by conducting a specified programme of research under appropriate supervision, all of which together must comprise at least two-thirds of the course of study.

Flinders Masters by Research degrees accord with the Australian Quality Framework (AQF): Graduates of Masters by Research degrees will have an advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice. They will have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently: analyse critically, reflect on and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories; research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice; interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences. Graduates will be able to apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.

Examiners of a thesis submitted for a Masters Degree by Research should satisfy themselves that the student has demonstrated:

a. evidence of an original investigation or testing of ideas;

b. competence in independent research or experimentation;

c. a thorough understanding of the appropriate techniques in the field demonstrated both by their application and a thorough review of the literature;
d. critical use of source material, experimental results (where appropriate) and published works;

e. appreciation of the relationship of the special theme to the wider field of knowledge; and

f. capacity to present well written work.

1.2 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

These degrees provide training and education with the objective of producing graduates with the capacity to conduct research independently at a high level of originality and quality. The student ought to be capable by the end of his or her candidature of conceiving, designing and carrying to completion a research programme without supervision. The PhD candidate should uncover new knowledge either by the discovery of new facts, the formulation of theories or the innovative re-interpretation of known data and established ideas.

Flinders PhD degrees accord with the Australian Quality Framework (AQF): Graduates of PhD degrees will have expert, specialised cognitive, technical and research skills in a discipline area to independently and systematically: engage in critical reflection, synthesis and evaluation; develop, adapt and implement research methodologies to extend and redefine existing knowledge; disseminate and promote new insights to peers and the community; and generate original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to a discipline. Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading scholar.

Examiners of a thesis submitted for the degree of PhD should satisfy themselves that the student has demonstrated:

a. evidence of an original investigation or testing of ideas;
b. competence in independent research or experimentation;
c. a thorough understanding of the appropriate techniques in the field demonstrated both by their application and a thorough review of the literature;
d. critical use of source material, experimental results (where appropriate) and published works;
e. appreciation of the relationship of the special theme to the wider field of knowledge;
f. capacity to present well written work;
g. a higher degree of independence of thought and approach; and

h. a significant original contribution to knowledge in the thesis.

1.3 Professional Doctorate

These degrees provide training and education with the objective of producing graduates with the capacity to conduct research independently at a high level of originality and quality in the context of professional practice. The student ought to be capable by the end of their candidature of conceiving, designing and carrying to completion a research program without supervision. The Professional Doctorate candidate should make a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the context of professional practice* and uncover new knowledge either by the discovery of new facts, the formulation of theories or the innovative re-interpretation of known data and established ideas. The Professional Doctorate candidate will typically achieve these goals in the context of professional practice. The Professional Doctorate candidate will also demonstrate, via a program of advanced and specialist coursework or research-integrated practice, attainment of advanced skills and knowledge and the capacity to apply them so as to be able to undertake a variety of advanced professional roles in an area of professional practice associated with the Professional Doctorate studies. The degree will comprise a minimum of two years of its assessable content by research that is specifically aimed at practitioners in the field.

Flinders Professional Doctorate degrees accord with the Australian Quality Framework (AQF):
Graduates of Professional Doctorate degrees will have expert, specialised cognitive, technical and research skills in a discipline area to independently and systematically: engage in critical reflection, synthesis and evaluation; develop, adapt and implement research methodologies to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice; disseminate and promote new insights to peers and the community; and generate original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to a discipline or area of professional practice. Graduates will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or scholar.

Examiners of a thesis, submitted by a Professional Doctorate degree candidate, should satisfy themselves that the student has demonstrated:

(a) evidence of an original investigation or testing of ideas;
(b) competence in independent research or experimentation;
(c) a thorough understanding of the appropriate techniques in the field or in an area of professional practice demonstrated both by their application and a thorough review of the literature;
(d) critical use of source material, experimental results (where appropriate) and published works;
(e) appreciation of the relationship of the special theme to the wider field of knowledge or area of professional practice;
(f) capacity to present well written work;
(g) a higher degree of independence of thought and approach;
(h) a significant original contribution to knowledge, including in the context of professional practice; and
(i) achievement of any specialised learning outcomes that are specific to the discipline or area of professional practice and that have been identified as essential to satisfying the degree requirements.

The University asks that the examination be conducted at the highest contemporary standards.

2 Consultation Between Examiners

There will be two examiners for a Masters Degree by Research, PhD degree thesis and Professional Doctoral degree thesis, both of whom shall be external to the University. Examiners will be experts of international standing in the discipline and will normally be still active in research/scholarship thus ensuring that their knowledge of the field or area of professional practice is current. A supervisor will not act as an examiner. In exceptional circumstances, the University Research Higher Degrees Committee may agree to the appointment of a third examiner. Examination arrangements for Cotutelle degrees are specified in the Cotutelle agreement.

Consultation between examiners shall not be permitted prior to submission of the initial report. In the event of divergence between the examiners being substantial, examiners will be invited to consult with each other in an attempt to reach an agreement and provided with the opportunity to offer a new opinion. For further information, please refer to sections 7 and 9 below.

3 Consultation with Supervisors

Examiners may not correspond with or contact the Supervisors in relation to any material that is

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Professional practice comprises engagement with governance, management and leadership, including policy or curriculum development, project development and management, and leadership and innovation in practice.
under examination during the examination process. Should an examiner require clarification of any matter relating to the material under examination he or she should contact the relevant Faculty General Manager* who will arrange for the matter to be considered.

4 Procedures for Resolving Disagreement Among Examiners
Details of the procedures to be followed when examiners of higher degree theses disagree are listed in section 9. Examiners are advised that these procedures may become operative in the absence of unanimous support among the examiners for one of the five recommendations listed in Section 7 below.

5 Release of Examiners’ Reports and Names
In order to preserve the integrity and independence of the examination process, the identities of examiners are not revealed to candidates until the examination process has been fully completed and then not if an examiner has clearly expressed a desire to remain anonymous. Where an examiner wishes to remain anonymous, he or she should indicate this fact on the report form.

It is the policy of the University that copies of all Examiners’ Reports (with names deleted if necessary) are passed on to the candidate at the conclusion of the examination process.

6 Submission of Thesis
The examination rules permit a candidate to submit the thesis to examiners, even if this is against the advice of the supervisor. Examiners will not be informed at any stage whether the thesis submission was supported by the supervisor.

A form of temporary binding may be used for the submission of theses to examiners. Examiners are advised that the presentation of theses in soft bound form is University procedure and the degree will not be awarded until permanently bound copies are submitted to the faculty.

7 Recommendations
The following are the possible recommendations that examiners are required to make. It is requested that while examiners are free to include more detailed recommendations in the body of their reports (minimum of at least one page), their choice of one of these five options be clearly stated in the examiner’s report form:

(a) the degree for which the candidate has submitted this thesis for examination should be awarded, subject to satisfying any coursework requirements; or

(b) the degree for which the candidate has submitted this thesis for examination should be awarded, subject to the completion of amendments (specified by the examiner) to be carried out to the satisfaction of the supervisor and the Dean of School (or nominee, where this is the same person), subject to satisfying any coursework requirements;

Note: Amendments may range from the correction of spelling or typographical errors and small changes to the text, to changes to the structure and substance of some chapters of the thesis that could be completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor and the Dean of School (or nominee, where this is the same person) without being returned to the examiner.

or

(c) the degree should not be awarded, but the candidate should be permitted to revise and re-submit the thesis or to take such further examination as shall be prescribed, or both. A thesis may be re-submitted for examination only once;

Note: This applies to changes that require a reshaping of the basic structure and substance of the thesis and extensive rewriting to bring it to an acceptable standard. In such cases the University expects that the re-submitted thesis would be examined by the original examiners, unless circumstances make this impossible or undesirable.

or
(d) in the case of a candidate who has submitted a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or Professional Doctorate, an appropriate Masters Degree or designated exit award should be awarded; or

(e) a degree should not be awarded and the candidate should not be allowed to present for the degree again.

8 Vice-Chancellor’s Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence

Examiners are also asked to indicate if they believe a candidate should be considered for the Vice-Chancellor’s Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence.

When indicating that a candidate should be considered for the Vice-Chancellor’s Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence the Faculty will consult both Examiners’ Reports. Principal Supervisors will be asked to nominate their candidates for this prize through their Faculty Research Higher Degrees Committee and will be asked to include information that addresses some or all of the following points separately:

- Content of Examiners’ Reports and Recommendations (copies of reports will be attached to the nomination);
- International and/or national recognition of the research undertaken for the thesis;
- Thesis research impact, both in terms of actual and potential adoption;
- Publications stemming from the thesis or publication equivalents and other appropriate research outputs (for example, patents, exhibitions, performances and other creative works). Unrelated publications will not be considered; and
- Other recognition for the quality of research undertaken for the thesis (for example, prizes and awards conferred, recognition by professional organisations, invitations to prestigious conferences).

The points above will be considered relative to the candidate's project and/or discipline. If examiners have any information to add to the points above they should be included as part of their report.

Please note, although it is expected that nominations would be for candidates whose thesis was passed without amendment, candidates passed with minor amendments may also be nominated.

For further information go to: [http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/awards-for-academic-excellence.cfm#vcdoctoralthesis](http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/awards-for-academic-excellence.cfm#vcdoctoralthesis)

9 Consideration of Examiners’ Reports

9.1 When both examiners are unanimous in making recommendations (c), (d) or (e) as listed in section 7 above, the supervisor and candidate will be provided with copies of the Examiners’ Reports and invited to comment. In this process the examiners’ identities shall not be revealed to the candidate. The Examiners’ Reports and the candidate’s and the supervisors’ comments will be referred to the faculty which will make a decision on the outcome of the examination. If the outcome is that the degree should not be awarded but that the candidate should be permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis, and there is considerable divergence between the revisions required by the examiners, the examiners will be asked to consult with each other in order to reach agreement on the revisions. The consultation process may include providing each examiner with the other examiner’s report and with the consent of the candidate, the candidate’s comments and those of their supervisor(s).

9.2 In cases of examiners not being unanimous in making any one recommendation, the following procedures will apply:

(i) The supervisor and the candidate will be provided with copies of the Examiners’ Reports and invited to comment. In this process the examiners’ identities will not be revealed to the candidate.

(ii) Where one examiner recommends the degree should be awarded or that the degree should be awarded subject to amendments to the thesis and the other examiner recommends that
the degree should not be awarded but the candidate should be permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis, examiners will be provided with copies of the supervisors’ and candidate’s comments and the other examiner’s report and invited to consult with each other in an attempt to reach an agreement. In the event of examiners offering a revised opinion, they will be asked to provide a written statement that identifies the reasons for the new opinion.

(iii) In all other cases where the examiners are not unanimous in making one recommendation, and in cases where examiners who have been invited to consult have declined or have failed to reach an agreement, the faculty will appoint an external arbitrator in consultation with the supervisor and the Head of School. The arbitrator will be sent the thesis, all Examiners’ Reports and the supervisors’ and candidate’s comments. The arbitrator will be invited to make a report and recommendation on the outcome of the examination in light of the divergent Examiners’ Reports and his or her assessment of the thesis. The faculty will make a decision on the outcome of the examination.

10 Honorarium

In accordance with current Universities Australia guidelines the recommended honorarium of $250 or $445 (before tax) is paid for the examination of a Masters Degree by Research or PhD/Professional Doctorate theses respectively (as of November 2013).

In cases where an Examiner is required to re-examine a thesis they will receive an additional honorarium.

11 Word Limits

11.1 Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law

The Faculty has determined that the length of a PhD thesis should be a minimum of 70,000 words and a maximum of 100,000 words and for Masters Degree by Research a minimum of 35,000 words and a maximum of 50,000. This excludes footnotes, bibliography, tables and appendices, but students should not make use of extensive footnotes or very large appendices in order to bypass the word limit. When students submit their thesis they will be asked to indicate how long the thesis is, and where it exceeds the normal word limit they will be asked to provide a detailed explanation of the reasons for its length. (The Faculty acknowledges that some students, already enrolled at the time of implementation of this plan, are well advanced with the writing of their theses. Where such students exceed the Faculty's word limit, they can make an individual case based on their enrolment circumstances.)

For the Doctor of Education dissertation (45 units) the word limit will be a maximum of 50,000 words and a minimum of 45,000 words.

11.2 Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

The Faculty has determined that the maximum word length of a PhD thesis should be 90,000 words and 50,000 words for a Masters Degree by Research thesis. These word limits apply to the main thesis text only and exclude footnotes, bibliography, tables and appendices.

11.3 Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

As a guideline for candidates, the length of a PhD thesis should be a maximum of 100,000 words and 50,000 words for a Masters by Research thesis, excluding bibliography and appendices.

For the Doctor of Public Health dissertation (72 units) the word limit will be a maximum of 55,000 words.

*Faculty General Manager has delegated responsibility to the Faculty Administrative Officer (Research Higher Degrees).

Last Amended KI June 2014