

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINING THE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (Ed D) DEGREE

1. CONTEXT

The Doctor of Education degree is a research professional doctorate which focuses on the practice of education. It is designed to assist candidates to develop new information or insight into their professional area. The candidates for this degree are drawn from a wide variety of educational contexts including schools, Technical and Further Education (TAFE), high education, adult, community and workplace education. Many practise within educational institutions and others are concerned with professional education in their own field, such as health, management, government and industrial settings. It should also be noted that many candidates practise outside the context of Australian culture as the school has a significant offshore enrolment and other candidates have been working outside Australia whilst undertaking their research.

The thesis component is expected between 50,000-60,000 words and constitutes two-thirds of the degree. The thesis should demonstrate a 'systemic and critical understanding of a complex field of learning and specialised research skills (AQF, 2013; 63) to advance professional practice., Candidates frequently employ qualitative methodologies including action research, evaluation research, ethnographic research, grounded theory and narrative enquiry. A professional doctorate may extend the bounds of traditional research frameworks. In professional practice research, the researcher may be at the centre of the research process and the concept of rigour is related to clear and careful recording with reflection and insight (Anderson and Heer, 1999).

It is intended that the degree be awarded after the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has demonstrated:

- A thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research;
- Competence in the professional area through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work;
- Independence of thought and approach;
- An original contribution to practice and knowledge within the profession.

2. POINTS TO CONSIDER IN READING THE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION THESIS

Examiners are invited to consider the following elements in terms of alternative approaches to conventional doctoral requirements.

a) Engaging with the literature

It is expected that the candidate will have engaged with a significant body of literature particularly in the context of professional practice rather than in a traditional PhD. In action research, for example, the issue is how the candidate has engaged with literature to provide insights into the results of the data collection and reflection. Candidates should show how literature has given insights into their thinking, has changed assumptions and enabled them to look at different aspects of practice or at practice in different ways. The use of literature with a different focus to the context or viewpoint of the research should be seen positively. Critical analysis of literature rather than summary or the presentation of one view is to be expected.

b) Intellectual grasp

The purpose of a professional doctorate is to extend knowledge that will clearly impact on professional practice rather than develop theoretical arguments. This does not mean that theory will not be extended but this will not be the focus. Candidates' work may involve the connection of theory and practice, show the future development of the work, or give a reflexive, self-critical account of the inquiry. It may also involve a systematic account of an inquiry to improve a specific area of practice such as the teaching of English or the development of a work practice component for technical education. Here past research and the theory should inform the approach and be used for critical analysis or consideration of alternatives.

Candidates should have a strong grasp of the application of their chosen methodology and its relevance to their research question.

c) Professional practice development and originality

It is intended that research for the Doctor of Education should be innovative, creative, present new frameworks or open up neglected areas. It should attempt to address a problem or provide original data in relation to identified issues. Examiners are asked to consider originality in context. For example, educational reform in Thailand is introducing new approaches that are quite established in Australia, such as student based learning and work practice placement. The use of established techniques in new contexts is to be valued. Independent research and evaluation and the encouragement of research and innovation by others in a collaborative context should both be seen positively.

d) Presentation

The thesis should be clear, easy to read and presented in an appropriate style. It should contain few errors of expression. Some presentations, particularly those based on action research, may present a product or outcome (curriculum, policy statement or report for example) as well as the account of the process.

e) Coherence

The thesis should display a coherent structure and be cogently organised and expressed. It may present the researcher's learning as a journey of argument and discovery.

f) Publication

To be of publishable quality is a usual criterion for the assessment of doctoral work. Candidates should be clear of their audience and publication to communities of practice or in practitioner journals should also be seen as valid outcomes of their research.

3. GRADING OF THESES

The University uses five categories for examiners' recommendations (refer to Table 1). Examiners are asked to select one category on the form supplied, and to attach a detailed report, elaborating on the selected category, to be seen by the candidate, supervisor, and Chair of Examiners.

Where a recommendation is made conditional on changes, amendments or requests for elaboration, it is important for the candidate that the specific nature of the changes, amendments, or elaboration be made as clearly as possible in the report.

The Principal Supervisor oversees corrections and endorses the detailed list of amendments made by the candidate.

It would be of assistance to the University if the recommendation and report could include specific comments on the following:

- To what extent and how the thesis,
- Makes a contribution to the knowledge of the subject with which it deals, and
- Shows that the candidate understands the relationship of the investigation to the wider context of the knowledge in which it belongs;
- The ability of the candidate to survey the relevant literature and to document statements adequately;
- The extent to which the candidate's attitude to their own work and to the work of others is critical and perceptive;
- Whether the literary presentation of the thesis is satisfactory;
- Any changes which should be made to the thesis before the degree is awarded.

Table 1 - Categories for Examiners' Recommendation

<i>PASSED without further correction</i>	This indicates that the thesis is an excellent piece of work, which may be passed unconditionally. (Note: An examiner may note minor areas that would benefit from further editing.)
<i>PASSED subject to minor corrections</i>	<p><i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i></p> <p>This category is used when the examiner considers there to be some relatively minor flaws that need attention but do not detract from the overall quality of the work. This may characteristically entail additional proofing, textual amendments or corrections. The examiner's report indicates the specific corrections required. Examiners do not see the thesis again.</p>
<i>PASSED subject to substantial amendment</i>	<p><i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i></p> <p>This category is used when it is considered that there are one or more areas that require amendment, but that with these amendments the work has sufficient integrity to pass. Characteristically, the amendment(s) will relate to clearly definable sections or elements, which are detailed in the examiner's report. Examiners do not see the thesis again.</p>
<i>DEFERRED</i>	<p><i>The candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/work in a revised form</i></p> <p>This category is used where the examiner believes that there is need for a significant revision without which the thesis/work cannot be passed. A deferred result implies that the thesis /work is well-grounded and, with additional work, as indicated, can pass. The specific revisions recommended are detailed in the examiner's report.</p> <p>A thesis/work with a deferred result may be returned to the examiner for re-examination. A re-examined thesis can only be graded as PASS or FAIL.</p>
<i>FAILED</i>	This result is recommended with the thesis/work is so fundamentally flawed in conception, methodology, methods, and/or overall conduct that even major revisions would not redeem it.

3. THESIS QUALITY

In addition to providing their examiners' report, examiners are also asked when examining a doctorate, to assess the quality of the thesis and generic attributes.

4. CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Graduate Research School.

If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the Graduate Research School will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners.

5. IN CONCLUSION

Winter et al (2000) point to the roots of the term 'doctorate' in the Latin verb docere, to teach. A doctorate can be interpreted as suggesting that the successful candidate has something to teach (ie. Something new, something worth passing on). Such a person teaches particular audiences in particular contexts. They conclude that a doctorate should be sufficiently speculative or original to command respectful peer attention. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF, 2013:63) indicates the 'Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or scholar.'

6. REFERENCES

Anderson, G.L. and Heer, K. (1999). The New Paradigm Wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities. *Educational Researcher* 40 (June-July): 12-21.

Winter, R. Griffiths, M and Green, K., (2000). The 'academic' qualities of practice: What are the criteria for a practice based PhD? *Studies in Higher Education*, March.

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