

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH DEGREES

DEFINITION OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH DEGREES

Doctor of Philosophy: this degree provides training and education in research under appropriate supervision, with the objective of producing researchers capable of conducting research independently, at a high level of originality and quality. A doctoral candidate should uncover or create new knowledge by the discovery of new information, formulation of theories, development of new approaches, or the innovative re-interpretation of existing ideas, theories or approaches. A PhD thesis word count is normally expected to be between 60,000 – 80,000 words.

A Doctor of Philosophy degree is awarded after examiners are satisfied that the candidate has demonstrated:

- A deep and thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research;
- Competence in the chosen field 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;
- Has made an original contribution to knowledge.

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;
- 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; and
- 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 (with no, minor or substantial amendments) 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.

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.

CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

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

To ensure management of perceived and/or objective conflicts of interest during the thesis examination process, when an examiner is nominated, candidates will be provided information on which examiners will be examining their thesis. Examiners, candidates and supervisors are advised that if a perceived or

objective conflict of interest emerges during the course of the examination process, they have a responsibility to inform ORTQI immediately.

If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the Graduate Research School will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners at researchexaminations@vu.edu.au