WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY

Graduate Research School

Higher Degree Research Examination Handbook

INTRODUCTION

Submitting your thesis for examination is a major milestone — one that is both exciting and a little nerve wracking. As you complete the final stages of writing, you may feel a mix of relief, anticipation, and uncertainty. Feeling nervous is completely normal.

This Higher Degree Research Examination Handbook has been designed to help you navigate these final stages with confidence. You'll find clear guidance on preparing your thesis for submission, understanding the examination process, and knowing what to expect once your thesis has been sent out for review.

Taking time to plan ahead and familiarise yourself with each step can make the entire process smoother and far less stressful. Our goal is to support you through these last months of your candidature and provide the information you need to feel prepared.

The handbook offers a simple, step-by-step overview and should be read alongside the Higher Degree by Research Policy and associated Procedures, particularly the Examinations Procedure. You'll find additional resources and practical advice in the Research Training vUWS site, which all candidates have access to at commencement. Examination forms are available from the Graduate Research School website.

As you move through these final tasks, try to stay focused and keep your momentum. The finish line is well within sight, and you've already achieved an incredible amount. Keep going—you are almost there!

Best wishes for the successful completion of your degree from all of us at the Graduate Research School.

STEP 1: SELECTING EXAMINERS

YOUR ROLE IN SELECTING EXAMINERS

You and your supervisors should discuss potential examiners from early in your candidature, not wait until you are approaching completion of your thesis. You should let your supervisory panel know your preferences, including:

1. whether you plan to opt in for an Oral Examination (compulsory for candidates commencing from January 2025);
2. which academics that you would like to examine your thesis; and,
3. those who you feel would be inappropriate.

Your supervisors may decide not to proceed with your examiner suggestions based on their knowledge of the examiners, and you should trust your supervisor's judgement. If you do request that a specific examiner should not be used, your supervisor should respect your preferences.

You will not be notified of the composition of your examination panel until after you receive your final results – or until your Oral Examination.

YOUR SUPERVISORS' ROLE IN SELECTING EXAMINERS

Selecting the right examiners is one of the most important tasks that your supervisory panel will undertake in your candidature.

Your supervisors will nominate examiners based on the following considerations:

- examiners must be leaders in the field of research you have undertaken.
- examiners must hold qualifications at least at the level which they are examining.
- examiners should have the right level of academic experience (inexperienced examiners may have a tendency to be more critical in their judgement).
- examiners may act as a future mentor.

Nomination of examiners occurs up to three months in advance of the final submission of your thesis. Your supervisor will approach potential examiners prior to nominating them to check their availability and willingness to examine the thesis within the specified timeframe following approval of your thesis submission. It is very important to stick to this timeframe, otherwise they may no longer be available. The Graduate Research School cannot progress the examination of your thesis without receiving an approved Nomination of Examiners form.

NUMBER OF EXAMINERS

All higher degree research examinations require two examiners. Should unforeseen circumstances prevent an examiner from completing the examination process within a suitable timeframe, a reserve examiner will be nominated by your supervisor.

For an MRes thesis where the two examiners' scores differ by more than 15%, an additional review will be performed by an academic staff member at Western and a suitable grade determined from the three scores.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Some important factors you should know include:

- Western Sydney University staff cannot be nominated as examiners.
- Examiners will not be appointed if they have ever acted on your supervisory panel.
- It is your supervisory panel's responsibility to approach examiners, and you must not contact any potential or confirmed examiners.
- Your supervisors will request that you provide an abstract that they can send to potential examiners.
- Examiners will be informed about the structure and expectations of Australian research degrees and the requirements for examination.
- There must not be a conflict of interest between you and an examiner.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The use of independent thesis examiners is an important factor in maintaining the quality and integrity of the examination process.

It is your supervisory panel's responsibility to ensure there are no conflicts of interest in the selection of your examiners, or to report and address potential conflicts of interest.

It is your responsibility as a candidate to inform your supervisory panel if you believe you have a conflict of interest with a potential examiner.

A variety of circumstances can lead to conflict of interest. The Integrity Compliance and Reporting Policy lists examples of different types of conflict of interest that may arise. This list is only indicative and is not to be considered exhaustive.

This conflict of interest policy has been benchmarked against the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) Conflict of Interest in Examination Guidelines.

STEP 2: PREPARING YOUR THESIS FOR SUBMISSION

CANDIDATE RESPONSIBILITIES

As a research candidate, you are responsible for the content, style and presentation of your thesis and for certifying its authenticity. You have a responsibility to ensure that you understand and avoid all instances of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.

You must accurately reference all sources in the expected style of your discipline and make clear the extent to which the work of others has been used in your text where appropriate. Minimise the inclusion of direct quotations in favour of paraphrasing with specific context and attribution.

You must acknowledge all use of generative AI, both in the research process and for writing or editing, noting that the University's Generative AI Guidelines for Researchers and the Use of Artificial Intelligence Policy may change during the course of your candidature and therefore you should discuss all use of AI tools with your principal supervisor before proceeding.

You are not permitted to incorporate any work that has been submitted for another degree into your thesis.

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

The best way to make a good first impression on your examiners is to present a thesis that has been carefully and thoroughly edited for style and consistency and proofread for basic spelling and grammatical errors. Examiners are very busy individuals and will often be reading your thesis outside of normal working hours – as such it is important to demonstrate that you prepared your document with care out of respect to those reading it.

Your examiners will be asked to provide a written report on the thesis, which includes comments on the standard of English and the professionalism of its presentation.

Editing and proofreading is an ongoing process that should occur throughout your candidature. The more scholarly reading and writing you do, the better you will become at identifying what makes good writing and applying that to your thesis. It is important to revisit sections of your work that you wrote early in your candidature to ensure that the quality is consistent with work produced later in your candidature.

Ensure that you are not the only person regularly reading your writing, as it's easy to miss your own mistakes. Aside from your supervisors, you should ask other research candidates you know to read samples of your writing – and be prepared to return the favour. It is also a good idea to get non-specialists from outside your field of study, including your friends, family or anybody else, to read your work as they will often notice confusing sentences or terms and abbreviations that have not been clearly explained.

PROFESSIONAL EDITING

You are permitted to use a professional editor in preparing your thesis for submission. Professional editing services should be used solely for the purpose of detecting minor typographical or style errors in your thesis.

For more information about finding and working with a professional editor, visit our Frequently Asked Questions.

If you use a professional editor, this must be acknowledged in your thesis. If the editor has experience in your discipline of study, you must include this information.

The extent to which professional editing is permitted applies equally to the use of generative AI tools for editing the thesis. In other words. Gen AI can only be used for 'low-level' refinement of writing, including language and expression (clarity, grammar, spelling), and consistency. Using AI tools for high-level refinement of writing, such as reordering ideas for better flow and rewriting, can breach academic integrity policies. Generative AI should not replace the core skills of researchers: thinking and communicating.

There is additional information about ethical and responsible use of AI for writing and editing in the University's Gen AI Guidelines for Researchers, which are available in the Research Training vUWS site.

TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORTS

As noted above, it is your responsibility to ensure that your work is an original contribution and free of any instances of plagiarism. When you are writing a large document such as a thesis, it can be easy to make errors or omissions in your referencing, which would be considered as plagiarism if not corrected.

Turnitin Similarity Reports help you identify these areas by highlighting sections of your text that closely match other material in the comprehensive database, providing an opportunity to correct integrity issues such as citation or paraphrasing errors and improve the originality of your work before final submission of your thesis.

It's advisable to regularly submit your work to the Turnitin plagiarism checking system to check the originality of your writing and identify referencing errors and omissions. A specialised Turnitin submission point for research candidates is available through the Research Training vUWS site. Submissions made through the Research Training site will not be permanently saved to the Turnitin database, preventing false matches with your own writing in future reports.

It is a requirement that you submit your entire final thesis document to Turnitin and provide the PDF copy of the Similarity Report to your Principal Supervisor as part of their approval for thesis examination. If necessary, you may need to show them the online Report and/or revise your thesis.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

All submissions must include a signed Statement of Authentication, an example of which can be found in Appendix 1. You will need to scan a copy of your signature and insert it into the final document.

ABSTRACT

The abstract showcases your ability to communicate a clear overview of your research. It is a concise (300 words) summary of the project and should include:

- a statement of the purpose of the research (aims, hypothesis, research questions).
- an outline of the methodology and key methods used.
- a summary of the main findings.

Your abstract should be both informative and accessible, highlighting the central argument or contribution of your thesis and providing readers with a clear sense of what your research achieved. A well-written abstract will help future researchers to find and cite your work.

Include specific time markers and location indicators (e.g. 'during 2004 in Sydney, Australia'). Your thesis may be accessed internationally, so it is important that your abstract provides the correct context for your research.

You should review previous examples of abstracts for Western Sydney University theses via the Library's Research Profiles and Repository.

FORMAT AND PRESENTATION

Western Sydney University does not prescribe a specific format for the presentation of your thesis as requirements and expectations vary across disciplines, but there are some mandatory inclusions that are described in later sections.

Most theses can be structured in one of two ways:

1) a single body of text that is structured like a monograph in linear format, conforming to what one might consider a traditional thesis; or
2) a compilation of chapters each addressing a discrete research project, but each also related to the overarching aim of the entire research program. Those chapters would typically be published or submitted/in preparation for publication. These would be accompanied by a general introduction and a general discussion that represents the program as a single body of work.

Some theses may include non-text or creative components that require a different style of presentation to a traditional thesis. You should talk to your supervisor about the specific requirements or expectations in your discipline.

Appendix 2 of this Handbook provides some non-compulsory suggestions about how to present your thesis; including advice about format and style, order of pages and other general presentation considerations.
You can also review previously awarded theses as a guide to style, formatting and presentation in your discipline.

THESIS LENGTH

A typical doctoral thesis is between 60,000-100,000 words. There is no prescribed word limit, and you should seek the advice of your supervisory panel for guidance. The thesis length does not include footnotes, references or other similar details.

NON-TEXT AND CREATIVE COMPONENTS

Appendix 3 of this Handbook provides detailed suggestions about how to present non-text components of your thesis, specifically for the Doctor of Creative Arts.

If you think non-text components will apply to your thesis submission, it is crucial to begin discussing your discipline requirements with your supervisors early in your candidature.

DECLARATIONS

The Declarations section covers information that examiners and readers of the thesis must be made aware of for clarity, transparency, and context. When approving your thesis submission, your supervisor will need to confirm that these declarations are included and complete.

Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP)

All HDR candidates must acknowledge support received through the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP). Even if you are not personally receiving an RTP stipend, fees offset or allowance, you benefit indirectly from the RTP via your School or Institute through support for shared research resources.

This acknowledgement is mandatory and must appear in all research outputs arising from your HDR project, including your HDR thesis. The precise wording that must be included is provided in Appendix 1.

Note: You must also add the RTP DOI in the Funding section of your ORCID profile, which you were required to create as part of your Candidature Plan.

Additional Support Received

Include acknowledgement of any additional external support you have received during your candidature, such as:

- Industry funded scholarships or support.
- Contributions from donors.
- Professional editing services.
- Any declarations that are not suited to your personal acknowledgments page.

Conflict of Interest

Next, declare any conflicts of interest that exist. There are a range of circumstances that can lead to a conflict of interest. The Integrity Compliance and Reporting Policy lists examples of different types of conflict of interest that may arise. This list is only indicative and is not to be considered exhaustive.

Artificial Intelligence

If you use artificial intelligence (AI) including generative AI in any aspect of the research, including all examinable work, this use must be acknowledged and described in a *Uses of Artificial Intelligence Statement*. This statement must also include a description of how AI outputs were critically evaluated. An example is provided in Appendix 1.

Contributor Roles

Include a *Contributor Roles Statement* in the form of a table which describes the contributions of the candidate and all other collaborators to the research and thesis. An example is provided in Appendix 1; the headings can be customised as appropriate using the Contributor Role Taxonomy, CRediT. Discuss this with your supervisors if you are unsure about which roles or collaborators to record.

Research Outputs

If the thesis contains material that has been published or submitted for publication as a research output, list the name and publication details of each of those works. Include information about the publisher's conventions on author order if relevant. An example is provided in Appendix 1.

If copyrighted versions of published research outputs are reproduced in the thesis, it is your responsibility to obtain permission to reproduce copyright material and to include a declaration that this permission has been granted. An alternative may be to include the version known as the Author Accepted Manuscript, which can usually be retrieved from publisher system on acceptance. The Library can provide more advice about this aspect of your thesis.

CONFIDENTIAL MATERIAL

All examiners are asked to keep all examination material confidential. They are also instructed not to analyse your work using AI tools as this would be a substantial violation of your Intellectual Property.

When the degree is awarded, a copy of your thesis is made available online via the Research Profiles and Repository unless other arrangements have been approved by the Dean, GS.

On your request, the Dean, GS may determine in exceptional cases that the thesis will remain confidential until after a specified time period (known as embargo), which shall not normally exceed one year, unless otherwise determined by arrangements in place under the Intellectual Property Policy.

STEP 3: SUBMITTING YOUR THESIS

THESIS SUBMISSION

Once you have discussed your intention with your supervisors, you can submit your thesis for examination via the ResearchMaster online system.

1. Save your thesis as a PDF document (maximum file size 40MB).
2. Log in to ResearchMaster and initiate a Thesis Submission form.
3. Follow the instructions in the form to upload your thesis and submit it to your Principal Supervisor.

The statement of authentication in your thesis must be signed. You will need to provide your Principal Supervisor with a PDF copy of your Turnitin Similarity Report.

The examination will not progress until approval has been provided by your supervisory panel and School/Institute.

If your thesis is not approved for examination, you may be required to make further changes and resubmit. If you disagree that your thesis is not ready for examination, contact your HDR Director or the Graduate Research School for advice.

You will receive an email receipt confirming your submission. If you do not receive this within two weeks, please follow up with the Graduate Research School.

EARLY SUBMISSIONS

In some circumstances, you may wish to submit your thesis for examination before your expected thesis submission date. Your supervisors and School/Institute will need to approve your submission via ResearchMaster, confirming it is ready for examination.

STEP 4: EXAMINATION PROCESS

BASIS OF EXAMINATION

Your thesis should make an original contribution to knowledge in the discipline in which your research is situated. When considering your thesis, examiners will assess whether:

- the thesis provides a sufficiently comprehensive study of the topic fitting to the degree in the discipline area, or in related interdisciplinary areas.
- the thesis is an original contribution to knowledge – meeting the aims established in your research questions.
- the methods adopted are suitable for the subject matter and are correctly applied.
- the research findings are suitably set out accompanied by adequate exposition and are discussed critically in the context of the discipline.
- the quality of English expression and general presentation of the thesis has been completed to a high standard.

For PhD candidates who commenced on or after January 2025, and any earlier candidates who opt in, the examination process has two components:
- Examination of written thesis; and
- Oral Examination.

Further information on each of these aspects is provided below. Candidates not completing an Oral Examination do not need to read that section.

LENGTH OF EXAMINATION PROCESS

You should understand that the examination process is complex and delays sometimes occur. An examination without delays will usually take 4-6 months, but this may vary on a case-by-case basis.

Examiners of doctoral/MPhil theses are asked to complete their report within six weeks of receiving the thesis for examination. Examiners of MRes theses are asked to do so within four weeks.

The examination process may be delayed when it is necessary to wait for a preferred examiner to become available or when an examiner experiences an unavoidable delay after the process has started. In most cases, it is better to extend the examination period by a short period of time rather than to restart the process with a different examiner.

The Graduate Research School monitors the progress of examinations and sends reminders to examiners. If there is a delay, we request feedback and an updated expected completion date. We will update your supervisors about extended delays.

The nature or complexity of some theses requires more time than usual for consideration. An unexpected delay or extended examination process does not mean that there is a problem with your thesis. We understand that this can be a difficult and stressful time, but unless you are contacted by the Graduate Research School or by your School or Institute HDR Director, you can assume that the process is progressing smoothly.

You must not attempt to contact an examiner under any circumstances as this will compromise the examination process and it will need to be restarted with different examiners.

RESERVE EXAMINERS

Reserve examiners are used in situations where an original examiner becomes unavailable or is unable to complete the examination. The reserve may also be used where there is a significant discrepancy in the outcomes received from the original examiners.

The Graduate Research School will liaise with your supervisors when deciding to use a reserve examiner.

I HAVE SUBMITTED – WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Remember, the examination process takes somewhere between 4-6 months – it is a detailed process.

Take advantage of this time by focussing in on your career goals. If you want to pursue an academic career, you can look at publishing your work or attending a conference. You can contact your supervisors or your network and investigate potential research assistant work.

If you have other career ambitions – and about 50 percent of research graduates do not pursue a career in academia – now is the time to look for other opportunities, such as participating in an internship.

After taking a well-earned break, you should use this time as productively as possible.

STEP 5: ORAL THESIS EXAMINATION

All PhD students who commence from 1 January 2025 must complete an Oral Examination (sometimes known as oral defence or viva voce) in addition to submitting their PhD thesis to complete their degree.

PhD students who commenced prior to this date can choose to voluntarily opt-in to complete an Oral Examination in consultation with their supervisory panel. It is important to decide this prior to your supervisors contacting potential examiners as they will need to confirm their willingness and availability to participate in the Oral Examination.

The Oral Examination forms part of the overall assessment of your ability to carry out a research investigation. It is used to assess both the candidate and the thesis submitted for the award of the PhD degree. In particular, the Oral Examination:

- establishes that you fully understand the work and its wider implications.
- provides you with an opportunity to respond to the examiners' preliminary feedback on your written thesis.
- enables the examiners to clarify issues in the thesis which may be unclear.
- helps the examiners to decide on the nature and extent of any revisions which may be required.
- authenticates your contribution to the thesis.
- ensures that you have a clear understanding of the contribution of collaborators to the thesis.

The Oral Examination takes place after the examiners have provided their preliminary reports and recommendations from the assessment of the written thesis. The Oral Examination will not proceed if the initial outcome is that the written thesis requires revision and re-examination and will instead be rescheduled for after re-examination.

The Graduate Research School will either advise you of the timing of your Oral Examination once it has been confirmed and scheduled, or advise that you are required to revise and submit for re-examination.

THE PANEL

The Oral Examination panel is comprised of:

- the Associate Dean, HDR, the HDR Director or another member of the Professoriate serving as Chair, and
- the two examiners of the written thesis.

For theses covering significant Indigenous studies content, the Director, Indigenous Research or another Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander scholar is invited onto the panel.

Your supervisory panel does not form part of the examination panel but may observe.

THE PROCESS

The Oral Examination will take place by videoconference. You will be asked to give a presentation and respond to questions from the panel. The panel will assess your performance in the Oral Examination against the following quality measures:

- you demonstrated detailed knowledge of the thesis.
- you demonstrated an understanding of your research in the broader context of the discipline.
- you were able to defend the methodology and conclusions of the thesis and display an awareness of any limitations.
- you effectively communicated the results of the research in terms of impact and application of new knowledge.
- you as an individual demonstrated a substantive and independent contribution to the discipline.

Upon completion of the Oral Examination, the examiners will arrive at a consensus on the overall recommended outcome. They will note any additional amendments that they recommend for the written thesis and/or identify amendments that they recommended in their preliminary reports but no longer require.

STEP 6: EXAMINATION REPORTS AND RESULTS

In assessing your written thesis, examiners are required to make a preliminary recommendation of one of the following outcomes and to write a full report on their findings.

Outcome	Explanatory Notes
A	The degree be awarded as submitted or following minor revisions of a simple, editorial nature as identified by the examiners. This recommendation is appropriate for addressing occasional typographic or grammatical errors and for cosmetic formatting issues.
R	Before the degree is awarded the candidate is required to undertake rewriting that is of greater magnitude than minor editorial changes (as identified by the examiners), to the satisfaction of the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board. This recommendation is appropriate where substantive yet straightforward changes to the text are required, including the addition or removal of whole sentences, other revisions that change the intended meaning for a portion of text and pervasive typographic or grammatical errors.
X	The candidate is required to revise and resubmit for further examination within a specified time. This recommendation is appropriate where the examiner has concerns regarding the quality or integrity of the work and/or inferences drawn from it and, therefore, the thesis is not able to be assessed in its current state.
F	The degree is not to be awarded. This recommendation is appropriate when the examiner has concerns about the quality or integrity of the work that cannot be addressed through reasonable revisions.

Note that each examiner is *recommending* an outcome. The Faculty/Institutes HDR Board may endorse a different overall outcome where appropriate and with justification. If you are advised that your overall outcome is X or F, refer to the information below.

OUTCOME X – REVISE AND RESUBMIT

If you receive an outcome of X, you will be required to rewrite and address the recommendations as outlined by the examiners. You will do this with the support of your supervisory panel and, if necessary, your HDR Director. The revised thesis and the response to the examiners' first round of feedback will be provided to the examiner(s) for the re-examination and will form the basis of the second examination. Amendments to the thesis must be restricted to addressing the recommendations; you must not add, edit, or remove any other sections.

You will have up to 12 months to revise your thesis and resubmit. Your Oral Examination will be rescheduled to occur after the re-examination.

In the second examination, no new criticisms can be introduced by the examiners – they may only review the agreed and approved amendments. If the examiners then recommend either an A or an R outcome, the Oral Examination of the thesis will proceed, if relevant, and an R outcome will be endorsed by the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board once it is satisfied with your response to the examiners' comments.

If the examiners do not believe the recommended amendments meet the required standard in the second examination and the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board endorses this recommendation, the degree will not be awarded, and the outcome will be an F.

OUTCOME F – DEGREE NOT AWARDED

An outcome of F is very rarely recommended by examiners, as a thesis should not reach the examination stage unless it is written to a standard suitable for the award.

Under an outcome of F, the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board may recommend resubmission of a doctoral thesis for a Master of Philosophy award. The work may have to be rewritten before it is submitted for examination at Master of Philosophy level.

RESPONDING TO EXAMINER REPORTS

Examiner reports are collated by the Graduate Research School and the detailed comments on the thesis will be released to you after a brief review by your supervisors and your HDR Director. At this point you will also be advised whether your Oral Examination will proceed as scheduled.

You will be required to prepare a detailed Candidate Response to the examiner comments, in collaboration with your Principal Supervisor, and complete any necessary amendments to your thesis regardless of the recommended outcome (A/R/X/F). However, when you are required to do this will depend on the advice regarding the Oral Examination:

- *If you are advised that the Oral Examination will proceed*, your Candidate Response and final/revised thesis should be completed and submitted to the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board **only after** you have received the Oral Examination outcome (although you may begin preparing these documents in advance if you wish).

- *If you are not participating in the Oral Examination, or if you are directed to undertake re-examination (X) of the written thesis*, you must first complete the Candidate Response and required thesis amendments and submit these to the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board.

Please note that for all MRes theses, the Candidate Response and completing amendments are strictly optional.

If amendments are made, all changes must be completed using the Track Changes function in Word and not simply by highlighting where changes were made – doing the latter makes it difficult for the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board to confirm those changes and may result in a delay to the outcome of your examination.

You will also be required to submit a clean copy of the final thesis, together with the tracked-changes version, to the Faculty/Institutes HDR Board for approval. You will have three months to complete these amendments.

Where amendments have been made, you should clearly indicate how and where the thesis has been amended. Where no amendment has been made, a brief scholarly justification should be provided. This can be completed in a table or in another format but, in all cases, all examiner comments must be addressed in full.

When you and your supervisor are ready to submit your materials for Faculty/Institutes HDR Board approval, please attach the following documents:

- A completed Candidate Response
- A clean copy of the final thesis
- Where applicable: a tracked-changes version of the final thesis clearly indicating all amendments made.

The tables in Appendix 4 may be used as a template for preparing the response, or candidates may present their response in another format. In all cases, all examiner comments must be addressed in full.

LIBRARY COPY

On the successful completion of your degree, you are required to submit a finalised PDF copy of your thesis and a completed Right of Access form to the Graduate Research School.

Your thesis will be uploaded to Western Sydney University Library's Research Profiles and Repository.

Your thesis will also be accessible via the National Library's TROVE portal. See also information under 'Step 2: Preparing your thesis for submission' regarding inclusion of published works within your thesis, as this is relevant for consideration of copyright when the thesis is made publicly available.

STEP 7: GRADUATION

GRADUATION PROCESS

The Graduate Research School will seek approval from the Research Committee for your eligibility to graduate, based on the recommendation of your Faculty/Institutes HDR Committee. You do not need to do anything at this stage, as the Graduate Research School will advise you when you are eligible to graduate and what you need to do for program completion.

Your graduation is dependent on you meeting all Western Sydney University administrative and financial requirements.

WHEN CAN I GRADUATE?

Graduation ceremonies occur in at different points throughout the year. Candidates who have met all requirements are put forward to the next graduation period.

If you cannot attend a ceremony, you can elect to graduate in absentia.

International students may be able to extend their stay in Australia until their graduation ceremony. If you would like a letter to confirm that you are awaiting graduation, please contact the Graduate Research School via WesternNow.

WHO WILL TELL ME WHEN I WILL GRADUATE?

The University's Events team arranges the Graduation ceremonies and will contact you prior to the approved graduation period, inviting you to graduate.

You must continue to monitor your student and personal email for important information and updates until after your graduation ceremony.

WHEN CAN I START USING THE TITLE DOCTOR?

You can start using the title Doctor (Dr) once your degree is officially conferred as notified via your student email and personal email recorded in MySR. You do not need to wait until your graduation ceremony has taken place.

HOW CAN I STAY IN TOUCH?

You will maintain access to your student account for only a short period of time after conferral of your degree. Note that this may happen prior to your graduation ceremony, and you should take steps to ensure that your important files, emails and contacts are still accessible to you once your student account is deactivated.

We encourage all graduating candidates to stay connected with Western Sydney University by registering with Western Alumni Community.

APPENDIX 1 – REQUIRED STATEMENTS

All these tables and statements must appear in the Declarations section, prior to the Table of Contents.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The following paragraph (or an equivalent variation) is compulsory and must be centred on a separate page and be signed by you as the author. You will need to scan a copy of your signature and insert it into the final document.

Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

………………………………………………………
(Signature)

RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM (RTP) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

You must include the following exact wording in the declarations section of your thesis, alongside other sources of support:

This research was supported by the Commonwealth through an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship [DOI: https://doi.org/10.82133/C42F-K220].

EXAMPLE CONTRIBUTOR ROLES STATEMENT

Table 1. Contributions of collaborators and supervisors to each of the five Chapters in this thesis.

Contributors	Conceptualisation	Funding acquisition	Methodology	Investigation	Formal analysis	Writing – original draft	Writing – review and editing
Claudia D Candidate	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Peter D Postdoc	3, 4		3, 4	3, 4	4	4	3, 4
Usher D Undergrad			2	2	2	2	2
Chester D Cosupervisor	2, 4	1, 2					1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Sally D Supervisor	2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4				1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
All other contributors			2, 3	2, 3			2, 3

EXAMPLE RESEARCH OUTPUTS STATEMENT

Chapters 1 and 2 have been published:

Candidate, Co-supervisor and Supervisor (2023) A literature review on my exciting topic. *Journal of Fascinating Stuff, 22*, e201. DOI: jfs.22.201 [A PDF of the published version is included in accordance with the CC BY4.0 licence.]

Candidate, Undergrad, Collaborator-A, Co-supervisor and Supervisor (2024) A lack of relationship between X and Y means that X is a good intervention for Z. *Journal of Negative Results, 4*, 55-66. DOI: jonrpub.2024.55 [A PDF of the published version is included, with permission granted by the publisher on 15 October 2025.

Chapter 3 is under review at the *Journal of Irreproducible Results* and has been published as a pre-print:

Candidate, Postdoc, Collaborator-B, Cosupervisor and Supervisor (2025) A surprising and unexpected relationship between A and B is observed once in a blue moon. Research Rxiv. DOI: resrxiv.90210

EXAMPLE USES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE STATEMENT

AI was used in this work for:

- Simple web queries using Google AI and ChatGPT to gain an initial overview of the research topic and methodological approaches.
- NVivo was used for transcription of recordings and thematic grouping.
- Testing and troubleshooting R and python code for statistical analysis using ChatGPT.
- Correcting grammatical and typographic errors and improving clarity of my writing using Microsoft Copilot.

The following strategies were used to critically evaluate the information obtained using AI:

- Independent keyword and author searches in Google Scholar and Scopus.
- A subset of recordings was manually transcribed and grouped into themes for comparison with NVivo outputs.
- Sought advice from a statistician on whether my analytical approach was sound.
- Compared code chunks to posts on Stack Overflow and to colleagues' scripts.
- Careful review of my text to ensure that the intended message remains intact and is accurate.

APPENDIX 2 – THESIS FORMAT GUIDE

This section is designed to guide you through the process of formatting your thesis for examination. These suggestions are not compulsory; however, they are strongly recommended, and you should discuss them with your supervisors to ensure they meet the specific expectations in your discipline.

FORMAT AND STYLE

Format refers to the overall appearance and organisation of your thesis. Style refers to expression, including tone, clarity, vocabulary, sentence structure, and consistency in citation practices.

- Western Sydney University does not prescribe any single style and format for theses because these differ across disciplines.
- You should follow the style recommended by your School or Institute and discuss this with your supervisors.
- It may be preferable to follow the style of a standard journal in your discipline.
- Format and style should be maintained throughout the sections.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that typographical errors have been eliminated and punctuation corrected, and that the language of the thesis reflects the highest standards of scholarly expression.

Good Practices
- Plan the overall structure of your thesis early to make it easier to sort and organise material logically.
- Aim for precision without oversimplifying. A concise, well-crafted writing style reflects the quality of your scholarly thinking.
- Ensure every assertion, claim, and factual statement can be verified either through your research findings or properly cited sources.
- Ensure that all references are complete, accurate, consistent, and correctly linked to the text.

Things to Avoid
- Over-personalising your writing or using an overly informal tone.
- Overusing exclamation marks or making jokes.
- Inventing new terms for established concepts.
- Padding out the text unnecessarily.
- Including references to sources you have not cited or read in your research.
- Using quotations without proper acknowledgement.
- Using sources that are unsuitable, unreliable, or out of date.

ORDER OF ITEMS

A thesis typically consists of three main parts: the preliminary pages, the main text, and the references and appendices section.

Title page
This page contains the thesis title, your full name, the name of the degree for which the thesis is submitted, the name of the university and the year of submission. This page is compulsory and is not numbered.

Dedication page
The dedication honours those who inspired or encouraged the writing of the thesis. A maximum of one page is permitted. This page is optional and is not numbered.

Personal Acknowledgements page
This page is to express recognition of and appreciation for special professional assistance provided by academic supervisors, other persons, agencies and institutions. This page is optional and is not numbered.

Statement of Authentication page
This is a signed statement to the effect that the work has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution and an undertaking that the work is original, and a result of the candidates own research endeavour.

An example is provided in Appendix 1. This page is compulsory and is not numbered. You must sign this page – even though you are submitting electronically. A scanned copy of your signature is acceptable.

Declarations
This page includes a series of declarations to acknowledge any external support you have received during your candidature. You should also use this section to declare any conflicts of interest, to declare any use of AI and to provide a statement of contributor roles and research outputs. See Appendix 1 for detailed information.

This page or set of pages is compulsory and is not numbered.

Table of contents page
The table of contents page is a guide to the contents of the thesis and is the first numbered page.

- The first item listed should be the first item that appears after the table of contents.
- Every heading and subheading within the text should be included in the table of contents.
- The headings on the table of contents page should be indented in a consistent style.
- Page numbers should be aligned with the correct heading or with the last line of multi-line heading.

List of tables page
Tables (including those in appendices) should be listed and numbered (Arabic numerals) in the order of appearance in the manuscript. Even if there is only one table it should be included in a list of tables.

List of figures and illustrations page
The list of figures and illustrations can be formatted similarly to the list of tables.

Abbreviations page
Provide a list of acronyms and other abbreviations used, in alphabetical order.

Abstract page
The abstract is a summary of your research project indicating the purpose of the study, the research methodology and a summary of the outcomes. There is advice about writing the abstract in the first section of this handbook.

Text of the thesis
This section contains the main body of the thesis. Each chapter or major section of the work should begin on a new page.

References
Your thesis must include references for every source mentioned in the text and the reference list should only include items which have been cited in the main text.
Refer to the section below for information on formatting.

Bibliography
Background materials or other sources used in carrying out the research that are not specifically listed or referenced in the text should be included in a separate bibliography.

Glossary
An alphabetical list of specialised and technical terms used within the thesis, together with their definitions, can be included.

Appendices cover page
Appendices consist of supplementary, informational, and/or illustrative material too lengthy for inclusion in the text. Each appendix should be labelled on the top margin (at left or centred) sequentially using capital letters and Arabic numerals (for example Appendix A or Appendix 1). Table and figures should be numbered consecutively as A-1, A-2, etc.

Index
An index with entries listed in alphabetical order may optionally be included.

PAGINATION

Page numbering
Each page of the manuscript should be numbered, except Title page, Dedication, Personal Acknowledgements Statement of Authentication, and Declaration pages. Place page numbers no less than 15mm from the edge of the page. The placement of page numbers must be consistent throughout the thesis.

Preliminary pages (Table of contents through to the Abstract) should be numbered in lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.) and indented 15mm from the edge of the page.

All pages of the main body of the thesis, beginning with the first chapter, should be numbered

consecutively with Arabic numerals, starting at 1. This includes pages containing illustrations, tables, bibliography, and appendices, through to the end of the document.

When landscape mode is used for pages containing figures, tables or illustrations, the page number position should be modified so that it appears as on other pages.

After all material has been assembled, the thesis should be verified carefully for completeness, for the order of the pages and sections, and for correctness of pagination.

FORMATTING

Font style

- Black is the best colour for the font.

- Any legible font, except script, italic, decorative or ornamental, is acceptable for the body of the text.

- Monospaced computer fonts that look like typewriting such as Courier should not be used except for computer programs or computer printouts, if they form part of your thesis.

- Bold font should be used for headings.

- Italics can be used for quotations and words in a foreign language to emphasise points.

- Underlining is not recommended.

- Fonts used for references, appendices, charts, drawings, graphs, captions and tables may differ from that used for the text.

Font size

The font size of the main body text should be no larger than 12 points, with smaller sizes of 8-9 points permitted for footnotes, graphs, formulae and appendices. Chapter headings should be centred on the page at least 5cm from the top and should be 4 points larger than the main text.

Line spacing

Line spacing should permit ease of reading and should be suitable for the font, page size and line length. Due to the number of possible combinations of these factors, it is difficult to give precise guidelines although some generalisations can be made.

- The main text should be one-and-a-half or double spaced, except when the preferred discipline style or journal dictates otherwise.

- Footnotes, bibliographic entries, lists, tables and appendices may be single spaced. Single spacing may also be more suitable for lengthy quotes, captions for figures or other descriptive text.

- Single lines of orphaned text at the top of any new page should be avoided.

- The spacing of subheadings should consistently follow the chosen discipline style or journal standard. Subheadings should not appear as the last line of text on a page.

- Numbering of sections or paragraphs should be consistent within each chapter and throughout the thesis.

Margins

Margins for the text, including tables, figures, charts, illustrative materials, references and appendices, should be set 25mm from the left, right, top and bottom edges. The main text should appear within this frame. Running headers and footers may be placed outside these margins but not closer than 15mm from the outer edges of a page.

Spelling

The Macquarie Dictionary is the basic reference for spelling used in Australian theses.

Footnotes, endnotes and in-text references

Depending on the discipline style or standard adopted, footnotes may be placed at the bottom of text pages and endnotes at the end of each chapter. Footnotes are normally separated from the text by a horizontal line.

In-text parenthetical references that correspond to a reference list at the end of the thesis should be carefully placed so as not to unduly interrupt the reading flow of the sentence.

Endnotes and footnotes should be numbered sequentially within each chapter.

References and bibliographies

Your School or Institute should have a preferred style for referencing which you should use in your thesis. If there is not a prescribed referencing style, you should discuss the options with your supervisor and use a consistent referencing style suitable to your discipline.

Generally, references and bibliography entries should be listed in alphabetical order by author surname. Hanging indentation is suggested with single line spacing within entries and double line spacing between entries.

Illustrations

The presentation of illustrative material should be consistent throughout the thesis. Tables, charts and graphs may be presented horizontally (landscape) or vertically (portrait) and must fit within the required page margins.

Photographs

The presentation of photographs should be consistent throughout the thesis. Photographs should be clear and high resolution. They can be produced in colour or black and white and may be presented horizontally (landscape) or vertically (portrait) and must fit within the required page margins.

Diagrams and tables

Diagrams and tables should be designed to fit a standard A4 page or should be reduced to fit if necessary, ensuring that all details remain clearly readable.

All tables and figures should be numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals and should be placed appropriately through the body of the text. In all cases, the table or figure should appear on the page immediately following the first text reference mentioning it. Titles must be on the same page as the associated table or figure.

Diagrams, tables and figures may be placed in either portrait or landscape mode, with the title and any accompanying information displayed alongside in the same mode.

Charts and maps

Charts and maps on oversized pages can be added as an appendix to the thesis. The quality must be clear and sharp. Maps taken from published sources will usually require copyright permission.

FINAL CHECKS

1. Format and Inclusions

☐ Have you included the acknowledgement of RTP?

☐ Have you declared the use of generative AI and stated how you have evaluated AI output?

☐ Is your signature included below the Statement of Authentication?

☐ Have you acknowledged and detailed the contributions of others?

☐ Have all required copyright permissions been obtained and attached or supplied?

☐ Have you included lists of abbreviations, illustrations, figures and tables?

☐ Is the title page formatted correctly and using the required wording?

☐ Is the order of pages correct, according to disciplinary or University guidelines?

☐ Are all pages numbered consecutively, including those with figures, tables, and appendices?

☐ Have all photographs, tables, and figures been included, properly labelled, numbered, and positioned with suitable captions?

☐ Is the overall document professional in presentation, with all text, images, tables, and figures clear and legible on every page?

2. Referencing

☐ Have you reviewed selected sections of your thesis and performed random cross-checks to ensure referencing accuracy?

☐ Are all footnotes (if used) formatted and numbered consistently?

☐ Are all references formatted correctly and completely according to your required referencing style?

3. Spelling and Grammar

☐ Is the title page free from typographical errors?

☐ Has a spelling and grammar check been run on each chapter?

☐ Has someone else read your thesis to check for typographical errors, clarity, and strong sentence structure?

APPENDIX 3 – NON-TEXT AND CREATIVE COMPONENTS

Non-text or creative components may include presentation of material in a form such as film, video, artwork, novel, poetry anthology or computer program. This may form part of a doctoral thesis.

Doctor of Creative Arts (DCA) candidates develop knowledge through action, undertaking the development of a body of original creative work within the chosen discipline. New knowledge comes from investigatory practice that is intellectually rigorous.

The exegesis explains the contextual and theoretical underpinning of the creative work. It includes a survey of recent representative literature in the chosen discipline(s). It is a reflexive analysis of creative process and is an engaging piece of writing constructed as a scholarly essay of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words. Photography, sound or video recordings, and web material may also support the writing. The relative weighting of the exegesis as a component of the submission for examination is at least 30% of the total, with the creative work constituting no more than 70%.

In the DCA, the creative work has a different role to non-text creative material in a thesis. The creative work demonstrates independent critical thinking to identify the research niche and constitutes a product that is supported by a written exegesis. In the DCA, the creative work is integral to the research and should be completed at an international standard that is suitable for an international exhibition or broadcast on a widely publicly accessed carrier such as the ABC.

Where the creative work is text based, you may present it as a separate volume, following the same guidelines for the general presentation of a thesis as described above, unless the presentation forms a component of the creative development.

Exhibitions and performances should be organised through your School or Institute. Performances and exhibitions should occur at Western Sydney University or associated venues. Consultation with your supervisory panel in conjunction with your School or Institute HDR Director may lead to external or professional engagements being considered as part of the submission.

A candidate presenting a body of creative work is required to present the exegesis concurrently. However, where the creative work is public performance or exhibition, you are required to submit the exegesis no later than three months after the final event. You will need to plan carefully to ensure that your submission is made within the time specified for candidature.

Communication
A substantial portfolio of work in the communication discipline is required. It should be equivalent to a series of programs for television, radio or multimedia presentation, or one program of substantial length. The work should be broadcast to a public audience; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length should be submitted. Other formats for communication dissertations can be developed on digital media.

Dance
High level choreography or leading role performance in publicly presented productions, including at least one of 90 minutes duration; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Electronic arts
Three solo exhibitions in galleries and festivals, or presentations in performative modalities. These may include tele-presencing, online interactivity, sensor driven interactivity, as well as the use of archival and recording technologies; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Music and sound arts - Composition
A folio of compositions including works that employ large resources or performance media demonstrating a variety of 'architecture', colours, textures - for example a full-length musical, opera or symphonic score, or 6-8 equivalent compositions for smaller resources or other media; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Music and sound arts - Performance
Three 60-90-minute recitals demonstrating high levels of artistry. For example, a full-length solo and chamber music performances, a concerto or its equivalent in western or non-western performance traditions; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Theatre
High level direction or leading role performance in publicly presented productions, including one of 90 minutes duration; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Visual arts
Three solo exhibitions in painting, in photo-media, in sculpture; or a 90-minute video or film; or video installation and exhibition; and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Writing
A folio of creative work such as a poetry collection (70-80 pages), a play script or film script (90 minutes production), or a novel (70,000 words); and an exegesis of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 words in length.

Examination will incorporate the creative component but recommendations of examiners for any additional work described in examination outcome options M, R, X or F will be made only to the exegesis.

APPENDIX 4 – RESPONDING TO EXAMINER RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the release of Examiner Reports, and (where applicable) completion of the Oral Examination, the candidate, in collaboration with the Principal Supervisor and supervisory panel, is required to prepare a detailed written response that addresses each examiner's individual comments, and (if applicable) addresses any matters arising from the Oral Examination.

Where amendments have been made, the candidate should clearly indicate how and where the thesis has been amended. Where no amendment has been made in response to an examiner's feedback, a brief scholarly justification must be provided.

The tables below may be used as a template for preparing the response, or candidates may present their response in another format. In all cases, all examiner comments must be addressed in full.

Overall Response
Provide a narrative overview that includes a general assessment of the examiner reports (e.g. level of support for the thesis, convergence or divergence of examiners) together with an overarching response; and a response to the recommendations arising from the Oral Examination (if applicable).

Response to Examiner 1		
General Comments		
Chapter / Page #	Examiner Comment *Copy/paste the relevant comment.*	Candidate Response *Engage with and respond to the comment and describe the amendments (if relevant).*

Response to Examiner 2		
General Comments		
Chapter / Page #	Examiner Comment *Copy/paste the relevant comment.*	Candidate Response *Engage with and respond to the comment and describe the amendments (if relevant).*

APPENDIX 5 – SUMMARY OF THESIS SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. Inform your supervisor of your intention to complete.

2. You generate the Turnitin Similarity Report for your entire thesis and discuss with your supervisors.

3. You submit the Thesis Submission form (including a copy of your thesis and Turnitin Similarity Report) via ResearchMaster).

4. If your submission is approved by your supervisor, the form will be sent to your HDR Director for endorsement. The submission is returned to the Graduate Research School for processing.

5. During this period, your supervisor contacts examiners to confirm their willingness and availability to examine your thesis.

6. Your supervisor submits the Examiner Nomination form to the School or Institute for consideration prior to submission or, at most, one week after submission.

7. Your HDR Director approves the nomination of examiners.

8. Your examiners are invited to examine your thesis and complete the process via ResearchMaster.

9. If you are doing an oral thesis examination, the GRS schedules this in consultation with you, the examiners, the Chair of the Examination Panel and your supervisors.

10. Examiners are sent regular reminders by the GRS to complete their report.

11. All examiners' reports are received by the Graduate Research School and their detailed comments released to you following a brief review by your supervisors and HDR Director.

12. If you are doing an oral thesis examination, it will occur at this point unless your written thesis requires re-examination.

13. You will need to work with your supervisor to make any changes that may be required to the thesis. You must document and track all changes for reporting purposes.

14. You and your supervisor report that changes have been made and send a copy to the School or Institute HDR Director for endorsement via ResearchMaster.

15. Two copies of the revised thesis, one with and one without tracked changes, and a list of completed amendments are submitted via ResearchMaster.

16. The Faculty/Institutes HDR Board recommends the award of the degree to the Research Committee for final approval or will advise if there are further requirements.

17. The Graduate Research School advises you and your supervisors of the final outcome and initiates the process of completing your degree with you and the Events Team.

This can be a lengthy process of up to 6 months, assuming no delays. You will receive minimal updates about the progress of your examination from the time that you submit until you receive an outcome.