

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Graduate Research School



Higher Degree Research

Master of Research

GUIDE FOR EXAMINERS

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to act as an examiner for our Master of Research (MRes) candidates.

The Graduate Research School provides this guide to assist examiners to understand both what is expected and to place the Master of Research thesis in context.

The Master of Research thesis should not be assessed as a PhD or an Honours project; the thesis has its own unique requirements.

Please read these guidelines carefully and if you have any further questions, contact the Graduate Research School via email: grs.exams@westernsydney.edu.au

Once again, thank you for the generosity in examining the work of our candidates.

Best regards,

Dean, Graduate Research School

EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

COMMUNICATION DURING THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

Please conduct all communication about the examination process, including queries about completing an examination, through the Graduate Research School HDR Candidature Team:

grs.exams@westernsydney.edu.au

We will endeavour to respond to you within two business days. **You must not contact the student under examination or their supervisors at any stage during the process.**

TIMEFRAME OF EXAMINATION

We are mindful that candidates are eagerly awaiting their results, so we encourage examiners to respond as soon as possible.

As such, we request that you please read the thesis and return your full Examiner's Report to the Graduate Research School **within four weeks** of receipt of the work. The requested due date is included on the Examiner Report form.

If you are unable to complete the report by the due date, please contact the Graduate Research School promptly as it may be possible to grant you an extension of time. However, please note that a delay may impact the candidate's eligibility for admission into a doctoral program or for a doctoral scholarship.

If you are unable to complete the report, an alternative examiner will be appointed. Please notify the Graduate Research School as soon as possible to minimise disruption to the candidate.

At the conclusion of the examination and when all conditions have been met and the degree awarded, a copy of the thesis may be lodged with [Western Sydney University Library](#) for the use of the wider research community.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is essential to maintain confidentiality of the examiners and examiners' reports during the examination process.

It is Western Sydney University policy that at the conclusion of the examination process the candidate will be given a copy of each examiner's report.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Western Sydney University is committed to promoting the ethical use of generative AI in line with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

Candidates are required to declare any use of AI technologies in their research. Examiners should carefully consider all relevant declarations and acknowledgments related to the use of gen AI when reviewing and assessing candidates' thesis submissions.

To maintain the confidentiality of the thesis content and examination process, examiners are strictly prohibited from uploading any candidate's thesis to AI platforms and/or using generative AI tools to generate any part of their examiner report.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The use of independent thesis examiners is essential to maintaining the quality and integrity of the examination process.

You cannot proceed as an examiner if, within the past five years, you have conducted research or published with the candidate or their supervisor, or have been an adjunct or employed by Western Sydney University.

Other actual, potential, or perceived conflicts may also arise; the University's [Integrity Compliance and Reporting Policy](#) provides indicative (but not exhaustive) examples, and our approach is benchmarked against [ACGR best-practice guidelines](#).

If you identify any conflict of interest, you must notify the Graduate Research School HDR Candidature Team (grs.exams@westernsydney.edu.au) as soon as possible.

HONORARIUM

You will be awarded an honorarium following the completion of the examination process.

If you are an Australian taxpayer, you will need to also provide one of the following:

- An invoice or claim for payment if you do not hold an ABN (complete and return the form provided).
- An invoice if you hold an ABN and are not registered to collect GST.
- A tax invoice if you hold an ABN and are registered to collect GST (you will need to add 10% GST to the honorarium).

If you are unable to quote an ABN, PAYG tax will be deducted at the maximum rate as prescribed by law.

If you are not an Australian taxpayer, you will need to provide both of the following:

- An invoice or claim for payment (complete the template provided).
- A Statement by a Supplier form (complete the form provided).

Alternatively, you can choose to waive your fee and Western Sydney University will direct it instead to our Student Welfare Fund to support the journey of future HDR candidates.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

You are required to return an Examiner Outcome online form that includes two components:

- A written report of a **minimum of two pages** (template provided); and,
- A recommendation of an overall numerical score.

Examiners are strictly prohibited from uploading any candidate's thesis to AI platforms and/or using generative AI tools to generate any part of their examiner report.

WRITTEN REPORT

Your examination report must be sufficiently detailed and comprehensive to:

- provide an explanation of your overall recommendation on the outcome of the examination; and,
- assist the candidate in their pursuit of future research, publications, and career.

The report should be a minimum of two pages and constructively comment on both the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis.

Note: Master of Research candidates are not required to make thesis amendments, so be aware that any revisions you recommend are to provide feedback and guidance for future study and will not be enforced as a condition of the candidate receiving their final grade.

While we encourage critical engagement, we also remind examiners of the stressful position candidates find themselves in and request the use of respectful and constructive language. If you feel it is warranted, you may submit a confidential addendum to Western Sydney University : grs.exams@westernsydney.edu.au.

The final outcome for the candidate will be determined by an assessment of the examiners' reports, with comments by the supervisory panel. All examiners' recommendations are given critical consideration.

EXAMINATION OF PUBLISHED PEER-REVIEWED OUTPUTS

The thesis may contain chapters that have already undergone peer review and been accepted for publication. You are requested to examine this material and provide feedback, but please limit recommended revisions to substantial matters that warrant publication of a correction. Please also keep in mind the conventions of the publishing journal when providing feedback.

RECOMMENDATION

You are required to recommend a numerical score on the Examiner Outcome form. Your mark will fall into one of the following categories:

85-100%: A thesis at this level:

- Clearly and fully outlines its research topic and objectives, explaining and justifying the project in relation to key developments in the field and recent literature;
- Clearly and fully outlines and explains the research undertaken, in terms of the methodology chosen and why it was chosen in preference to alternatives;
- Draws clear and fully-supported conclusions from the research that allows for critical reflection on the research questions, the current status of related research and possible future directions for research; and,
- Is clearly and cogently structured and well-written, and conforms to disciplinary conventions in terms of its presentation.

A candidate producing work of this quality is capable of going on to original and innovative research and is strongly suited for enrolment in PhD.

75-84%: A thesis at this level:

- Provides a good account of the research objectives in relation to developments in the field and recent literature;
- Explains the research undertaken and why a certain methodology was chosen as appropriate;
- Draws conclusions that are broadly supported by the research, and that respond clearly to the research question; and,
- Is clearly structured and written, and conforms to disciplinary conventions in terms of its presentation.

A candidate producing work of this quality is capable of undertaking a PhD.

65-74%: A thesis at this level:

- Has a clear research objective informed by developments in the field and recent literature;
- Explains its methodology clearly;
- Relates its conclusions clearly to the research undertaken; and,
- Is adequately written, structured and presented.

A candidate working at this level is capable of higher degree research, but not yet at a doctoral level.

50-64%: A thesis at this level:

- Identifies its research objective;
- Has a clear methodology;
- Draws conclusions based on the research undertaken;
- Is written and presented adequately.

A candidate working at this level is not capable of further higher degree research at this stage of their research career.

Below 50%

The thesis does not meet the standard for the award of the degree.

Please note: Unlike a PhD, the students will not be given the opportunity to re-draft and re-submit. As such, the original mark will stand.

The only exception is where a student receives below 50%. In this situation, they will be offered the opportunity to re-submit but can only receive a maximum mark of 50%.

MASTER OF RESEARCH

The Master of Research (MRes) degree is aimed at the research skills development of the candidate, with particular emphasis on research methodology appropriate to the field of study.

It is intended to provide candidates with the opportunity to develop their potential for research, enhance their skills in problem identification and specification, and their ability to develop and present solutions.

The MRes requires the student complete the following:

- A year of coursework in Year 1; and
- A thesis of approximately 20-25,000 words in Year 2.

BASIS OF EXAMINATION

The MRes thesis should not be assessed as a PhD or an Honours project; the thesis has its own unique requirements. In assessing the work, you are asked to determine whether:

- the thesis as a whole makes a contribution to the knowledge of the subject with which it deals at research masters level. It is not expected that originality will be at the level of a doctorate.
- the thesis provides a sufficiently comprehensive study of the topic appropriate to the degree in the discipline area, or in related interdisciplinary areas.
- the methods adopted are appropriate to the subject matter and are appropriately 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 and general presentation is satisfactory.

MASTER OF RESEARCH IN CREATIVE ARTS

The Master of Research also provides extended and advanced training in the creative arts, where projects and investigative practice provide a contribution to professional and scholarly knowledge. Creative arts candidates should generate knowledge through practice, undertaking the development of a body of original creative work within the chosen discipline. Candidates should also develop theorisation that demonstrably influences their creative practice and output, including methodologies.

MRes candidates working in the creative arts should demonstrate many of the following attributes:

- Technical and conceptual innovation in their discipline;
- Commitment to research and development as a means of solving problems;
- Familiarity with new technology and its applications;
- Knowledge in theoretical foundations and highly developed skills in the application of theory to practice and creative reflection;
- Effective and advanced communication at all levels;
- Ability to articulate a broad vision of practice and practice-led research and its relationship to social, cultural and community needs;
- Ability to contribute to the advancement of policy and practice in the creative arts.

ASSESSABLE WORK

These MRes candidates are required to produce an examinable thesis accomplished during the period of enrolment. The thesis comprises:

- a body of creative work; and
- an exegesis of approximately 8,000 to 10,000 words.

The exegesis demonstrates the development and application of theory within a creative process and the production of the creative work. It includes a survey of recent representative literature in the chosen discipline(s). It is also a reflexive analysis of creative process and is an engaging piece of writing constructed as a scholarly essay.

The relative weighting of the exegesis as a component of the thesis submission for examination should be at least 30% of the total, with the creative practice constituting no more than 70%. The requirements and relative weightings for examinable creative practice and exegesis are discussed and developed between candidate and supervisory panel on commencement.

The following examples reflect some of the different creative disciplines supported by the University. These examples are intended to be indicative and not exhaustive, and should be accompanied by an exegesis of approximately 8,000 to 10,000 words.

- **Communication/Media Arts:** A body of creative work equivalent to a program for television, radio, a selection of multimedia presentations, or one program of substantial length. For example, a one-off film of 10-20 minutes in length. Other formats for communication dissertations could be developed on HDV, DV, DVD, DAT, CD, photo-media and on-line digital media. The work must be broadcast to a public audience.
- **Electronic Arts:** A solo exhibition in a gallery or festival, or presentations in performative modalities. These may include telepresencing, online interactivity, sensor driven interactivity, as well as the use of archival and recording technologies;
- **Music Composition:** a folio of compositions including works that employ resources or performance

media demonstrating a variety of 'architecture', colours, textures for example, a musical, opera or symphonic score, or 2-3 compositions for smaller resources or other media;

- **Music Performance:** the staging of a live performance or concert and recital, each of 20 minutes duration, demonstrating high level artistry encompassing performance practice, production values and spatial considerations.
- **Writing:** an original poetry collection (20-30 pages), a play script or film script (30 minutes production), or a novella or short story (20,000 words);
- **Design:** A portfolio of design documentation relating to a coherent creative project with well-articulated outcomes in community or industry settings. The forms of presentation may utilise the full range of computer-based applications that best serve the communicational needs of the project. These may be stand-alone formats for distribution (e.g. MP3, MP4, DVD) exhibited works as installations; or on-line interface projects.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A candidate presenting a body of creative work is required to present the exegesis concurrently except where the body of creative work involves a public performance or exhibition, in which case the candidate is required to submit the exegesis no later than three months after the final event.

It is expected that a high level of intellectual and research acumen will be demonstrated throughout candidature. The submitted thesis should show evidence of significant conceptual development, as demonstrated in exhibition, performance, writing, screening or publication during the period of candidature.

Performances, presentations and exhibitions should occur at the University or associated venues.

Consultation with the supervisory panel in conjunction with the HDR Director may lead to external or professional engagements being considered as part of the submission.

Examination will incorporate the creative component and the exegesis.

