



**AUSTRALIS
BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

Higher Degree Research (HDR) Assessment and Examination Policy and Procedure

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to set out how Australis assesses and examines Higher Degree by Research (HDR) theses. It establishes the requirements for thesis submission, examiner appointment, examination processes, examination outcomes, and the conferral of HDR awards. It ensures that examination decisions are made independently, consistently, and in accordance with the academic standards applicable to the relevant AQF level. This document applies to all HDR awards offered by Australis and is to be read in conjunction with the *HDR Candidate Progress Procedure*, *HDR Supervision Policy and Procedure* and *Research Ethics and Integrity Policy and Procedure*.

2. SCOPE

This Policy and Procedure applies to all HDR theses submitted for examination at Australis. It sets out the processes for the nomination and appointment of examiners, the conduct of thesis examination, the determination of examination outcomes, the management of revisions and resubmission, and the certification and conferral of HDR awards.

This document applies to HDR candidates and to those involved in HDR examination processes, including members of the student supervisory panel, the HDR Director, the Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC), and the Academic Board, in accordance with their respective roles.

Assessment of coursework components within a HDR award is governed by the *Assessment Policy and Procedure* and the *Student Academic Progression Monitoring and Intervention Policy and Procedure*.

3. DEFINITIONS

See the Australis *Glossary of Terms* for definitions.

4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

The assessment and examination of HDR work at Australis is guided by clear academic standards and defined governance processes. These principles ensure that examination decisions are fair, independent, and aligned with the level of the award, while maintaining the integrity of the research environment.

4.1. Academic Standards and Integrity

- a. HDR theses must meet the requirements of the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level for the award and demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge or professional practice appropriate to that level.

- b. All HDR research must be conducted and assessed in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Australis' policies on research ethics, intellectual property, and academic integrity.
- c. Where research involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, communities, cultural knowledge, or data, research and examination processes must support culturally appropriate and ethically sound practice, consistent with Australis' ethics requirements and relevant national guidance.
- d. Examination criteria, outcome categories, and submission requirements must be clearly communicated to candidates and examiners to support consistency and fairness.

4.2. Independence, Fairness and Transparency

- a. The award of a HDR qualification is subject to independent external examination by appropriately qualified examiners.
- b. Examiner selection and appointment processes must protect independence and manage real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- c. Examination outcomes must be determined through a transparent academic process that ensures procedural fairness and appropriate oversight.

5. THESIS REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the academic and presentation requirements that apply to theses submitted for examination in Higher Degree by Research awards at Australis. It outlines the standards expected of all HDR candidates and identifies additional requirements where relevant to the level of the award.

Thesis requirements operate alongside the *HDR Candidate Progress Procedure* and the *HDR Supervision Policy and Procedure* and must be satisfied before a thesis may proceed to formal examination.

5.1. General Requirements for All HDR Awards

All theses submitted for examination must:

- a. Be written in English and presented in a coherent academic format appropriate to the discipline.
- b. Include a clear statement of the research problem, methodology, analysis, and conclusions.
- c. Demonstrate scholarly engagement with relevant literature and appropriate use of evidence.
- d. Comply with Australis policies relating to academic integrity, authorship, intellectual property, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

- e. Include a signed declaration of originality confirming that the work is the candidate's own, except where appropriately acknowledged.
- f. Comply with any approved thesis formatting and submission guidelines issued by Australis.
- g. Not include material that has been submitted for another qualification at Australis or elsewhere, except where prior work is appropriately cited and approved in accordance with Australis' policies.

5.2. Requirements by AQF Level

In addition to the general requirements above, the thesis must meet the expectations of the relevant AQF level for the award in which the candidate is enrolled.

For a Master's degree by research, the thesis must demonstrate:

- a. Advanced knowledge of the discipline area;
- b. The application of research principles and methods; and
- c. A contribution to knowledge or professional practice appropriate to AQF Level 9.

For a Doctoral degree by research, the thesis must demonstrate:

- a. A substantial and original contribution to knowledge and/or professional practice;
- b. Advanced theoretical and methodological rigour; and
- c. The capacity for independent research at a level consistent with AQF Level 10.

6. EXAMINER APPOINTMENT AND INDEPENDENCE

The integrity of HDR examination depends on the independence, expertise, and objectivity of appointed examiners. Examiner selection must ensure academic credibility while remaining operationally efficient and proportionate to the scale of HDR provision at Australis.

6.1. Eligibility Criteria

Examiners must:

- a. Hold a doctoral qualification in a relevant discipline or demonstrate equivalent research expertise and standing appropriate to the level of the award being examined.
- b. Have relevant research expertise in the field of the thesis, evidenced by research outputs, professional standing, or academic leadership in the discipline.
- c. Be of international standing considering the following:
 - Prior experience supervising or examining research at an equivalent or higher level and demonstrate capacity to assess research at the required level.
 - Publications in quality (Q1 or Q2) journals or equivalent as defined by the Australian Business Deans Council (or equivalent e.g. Academic Journal Guide of the Association of Business Schools UK).

- Evidence of published monographs in Tier 1 Academic Publishing Houses (e.g. Melbourne University Press, Oxford University Press, SAGE, Wiley, etc)
 - Evidence of quality technical reports from reputable organisations (e.g. CSIRO, IEEE, ACS)
 - Presence at refereed international conferences of standing in the field.
- d. Be external to Australis and independent of the candidate and supervisory team.

An examiner is not independent if they:

- have been directly involved in the supervision of the thesis;
- have a personal, professional, or commercial relationship with the candidate or supervisors that may give rise to an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest; or
- have collaborated closely with the candidate or supervisors in a manner that could reasonably be seen to compromise impartiality.

All nominated examiners must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest prior to appointment.

The HDR Director will determine whether any declared relationship renders a nominee ineligible to act as examiner.

6.2. Nomination and Approval Process

The Principal Supervisor, in consultation with the supervisory panel, will nominate potential examiners using the approved Recommendation of Examiners form.

Nominations must include:

- evidence of the nominee's academic qualifications and expertise;
- confirmation of independence;
- a brief justification of suitability; and
- identification of any declared conflicts of interest.

The HDR Director will review and approve examiner appointments, having regard to eligibility criteria and independence requirements.

Approved appointments will be reported to the Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC) for oversight and noting.

If an approved examiner declines or becomes unavailable, the HDR Director may appoint an alternative eligible examiner consistent with this policy.

6.3. Confidentiality

The nomination and appointment of examiners is confidential.

Candidates may identify individuals they believe should not be appointed due to a potential conflict of interest. Beyond this, candidates must not participate in the selection of examiners.

Any attempt by a candidate or supervisor to improperly influence an examiner during the examination process may result in the examiner being stood down and the matter being escalated to the Academic Board.

7. EXAMINATION PROCESS

7.1. Submission to Examination

A thesis may only be submitted for examination once:

- a. The Student Supervisory Panel (SSP) has confirmed that the thesis is ready for examination;
- b. All required compliance matters, including ethics approval where applicable, have been satisfied; and
- c. A formal Intention to Submit has been lodged in accordance with this Policy.

The thesis must be submitted in the format prescribed by Australis and accompanied by:

- a declaration of originality and authorship;
- confirmation of ethics compliance where applicable; and
- any required acknowledgements or disclosures.

The HDR Director is responsible for confirming that submission requirements have been met prior to dispatch of the thesis to examiners.

7.2. Dispatch and Examiner Reports

Once submission requirements are satisfied:

- a. The HDR Director will appoint the approved examiners and provide them with the thesis and relevant examination materials;
- b. Examiners will be provided with the examination criteria and outcome categories set out in this Policy;
- c. Examiners will normally be requested to submit written reports within six to eight weeks, unless otherwise agreed.

Examination reports must include:

- an assessment of the thesis against the relevant AQF level;
- a recommendation in accordance with the published outcome categories; and
- clear justification for any recommended revisions.

All examination processes are conducted confidentially.

7.3. Materially Divergent Reports

Where examiner recommendations are materially divergent, the HDR Director must refer the matter to the Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC).

The HDRC may:

- appoint an additional examiner;
- seek clarification from existing examiners; or
- determine the appropriate outcome based on the examination evidence.

A report will be considered materially divergent where:

- recommendations differ by more than one outcome category; or
- one examiner recommends fail and another recommends a pass category; or
- the HDR Director determines that the recommendations cannot reasonably be reconciled without further academic review.

8. EXAMINATION OUTCOMES AND DETERMINATION

8.1. Outcome Categories

Examiners may recommend one of the following outcomes:

- a. Pass without revisions;
- b. Pass subject to minor revisions;
- c. Pass subject to major revisions;
- d. Revise and resubmit for examination;
- e. Fail.

Timeframes for revisions and resubmission are set out in Section 9 of this Policy.

8.2. Determination of Outcome (HDR Director Role)

Following receipt of examiner reports, the HDR Director will determine the final examination outcome in accordance with the published outcome categories in this Policy.

In making that determination, the HDR Director must act consistently with the recommendations of the examiners and must not substitute their own academic judgement for that of the examiners.

Where examiner reports are materially divergent, where a recommendation of fail is made, or where there is ambiguity requiring academic interpretation beyond the published outcome categories, the matter must be referred to the HDRC for determination.

All examination determinations must be recorded in writing. Where interpretation or clarification has been required, the reasons for the decision must also be documented.

8.3. Recommendation for Conferral

Once all examination requirements have been satisfied, including completion of required revisions, the HDR Director will certify that the candidate has met the academic requirements of the award.

The Academic Board will consider a recommendation for conferral of the award and, if satisfied that all requirements have been met, will recommend conferral to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors is responsible for formally conferring the award.

9. REVISIONS AND RESUBMISSION

This section sets out the requirements that apply where examiners recommend revisions to a thesis following examination.

9.1. Minor Revisions

Where examiners recommend Pass with minor revisions, the candidate must complete the required amendments within the timeframe specified in the outcome notification, normally within one month.

Minor revisions are reviewed and confirmed by the Principal Supervisor. Once the revisions have been satisfactorily completed, the HDR Director will confirm that the examination requirements have been met and the award may proceed to conferral in accordance with Section 8.

9.2. Major Revisions

Where examiners recommend Pass with major revisions, the candidate must complete the required amendments within the timeframe specified in the outcome notification, normally within two months.

The HDR Director will determine whether the revised thesis:

- may be confirmed on the basis of supervisory review; or
- requires review by one or more of the original examiners before the examination outcome is finalised.

The basis for the determination must be documented.

9.3. Revise and Resubmit for Examination

Where examiners recommend Revise and resubmit for examination, the candidate may be permitted one opportunity to revise and resubmit the thesis.

The revised thesis must be submitted within the timeframe specified in the outcome notification, normally within three months.

The resubmitted thesis will be sent for re-examination in accordance with Section 7. Examiners of a resubmitted thesis may recommend:

- Pass, with or without further minor amendments; or
- Fail.

If examiner recommendations following resubmission are materially divergent, the matter will be managed in accordance with Section 8.2.

9.4. Requirements During Revision

For all revision categories:

- The candidate must submit a revised thesis and a detailed response document outlining how each examiner comment has been addressed or explaining why a recommendation has not been adopted.
- The candidate must maintain enrolment during any approved revision or resubmission period in accordance with Australis enrolment requirements.
- Where a candidate does not submit required revisions within the approved timeframe, and no extension has been granted, the HDR Director may determine that the thesis will be recorded as a Fail. Any such decision must be communicated in writing and is subject to review or appeal in accordance with Section 10.

10. APPEALS

HDR candidates have the right to seek review of examination-related decisions in accordance with the *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

Appeals against examination outcomes are limited to grounds of procedural irregularity, bias, conflict of interest, or failure to apply this Policy correctly. An appeal will not be accepted solely on the basis of academic disagreement with examiner judgment.

An appeal must be submitted in writing within twenty (20) working days of formal notification of the examination outcome.

Where an appeal is lodged:

- a. The matter will be considered in accordance with the *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.
- b. The appeal will be reviewed by a decision-maker or committee independent of the original determination.
- c. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing, including reasons for the decision.

Where an appeal is upheld, appropriate remedial action may include referral to additional independent examination, reconsideration of procedural compliance, or other corrective action considered proportionate to the circumstances.

11. RECORDS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All documentation associated with HDR examination must be managed in accordance with Australis' *Records and Information Management Policy* and applicable *Privacy Policy*.

Examination records include, but are not limited to:

- examiner nominations and approvals;
- conflict of interest declarations;
- examiner reports;
- outcome determinations and supporting documentation; and
- records of revisions and resubmission where applicable.

Examination reports and related correspondence are confidential and must not be disclosed except as required for the proper administration of the examination process or as required by law.

Australis will retain an official electronic copy of each final approved thesis for institutional record purposes. The retention and storage of theses will be managed in accordance with Australis' records management requirements. Nothing in this section requires public release of a thesis unless otherwise determined in accordance with Australis policy.

12. RELATED DOCUMENTS, EXTERNAL REFERENCES AND VERSION CONTROL

12.1. Related / Referenced Documents

- Academic Documentation and Graduation Policy and Procedure
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Guidelines for Responsible and Ethical Use of AI
- HDR Candidate Progress Procedure
- HDR Assessment and Examination Guidelines
- Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC) Terms of Reference
- HDR Supervision Policy and Procedure
- Privacy Policy
- Records and Information Management Policy
- Responsible Conduct of Research Policy and Procedure
- Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Recommendation of Examiners Form (Australis template)

12.2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Education Policy Related Legislation and External References

- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Research and Research Training (Version 2.0, September 2022)
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Revised 2023)
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

12.3. Version Control

Version	Date	Reviewed/approved by	Key notes/changes
2.1	26/02/26	AB	Approved at the AB 26/02/26 meeting

12.4. Document Review

To be reviewed at least every five (5) years from the date of final approval