

# Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 9 Submission, Examination and Classification

## Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines Higher Degree by Research (HDR) thesis submission, nomination of examiners, examination, amending the examined thesis, and the classification and conferral process.

## Section 2 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(2) HESF: 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students.

(3) ESOS Act: Part 3 Division 2; Part 5 Division 2.

(4) Standards for RTOs: Standard 5; 7; Schedule 6.

## Section 3 - Scope

(5) This Procedure applies to domestic and international candidates and University staff administering this Procedure.

## Section 4 - Definitions

(6) International Standing – Defined as publications or grants of international standing, international collaboration or international research experience.

(7) Thesis Classification – The classification of a thesis is the process whereby a result is assigned to a HDR degree/thesis based on the majority result from the examiners reports.

## Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(8) See [Higher Degrees by Research Policy](#).

## Section 6 - Procedures

### Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Office for Researcher Training, Quality and Integrity (ORTQI)	<p>Place the candidate under examination when the Release of Thesis has been signed by the Research Institutes.</p> <p>Dean to approve the Nomination of Examiners.</p> <p>Send the thesis to examiners for examination and follow up on examiner reports, as required.</p> <p>Upon receipt of the examiner reports, release the reports to the candidate, supervisors and chair of examiners.</p> <p>Receive and forward the Recommendation on Classification documentation to the appropriate academics for an outcome.</p> <p>Dean to approve the Recommendation on Classification</p>
Principal Supervisor	Nominate appropriate examiners for the candidate's degree in accordance to the procedures and submit to the ORTQI.
Research Institutes	<p>Endorse the Nomination of Examiners.</p> <p>Make a recommendation on Classification to the Dean.</p>

## Part B - General

(9) HDR candidates will have their thesis examined by at least two external examiners.

(10) The examination process varies by degree type.

(11) The relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute, or their nominee, acts as Chair of Examiners for HDR theses and has academic responsibility for the examination process.

(12) The ORTQI manages the conduct of the examination and classification process.

(13) Where the Principal Supervisor is also the Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee), he or she is unable to act as Chair of Examiners and another senior academic must act as the Chair of Examiners for that candidate's thesis. ORTQI must be advised of the appointment at the time the thesis is submitted for examination.

(14) During their first year of study (EFT), PhD (Integrated) candidates will be required to submit a Year 1 Thesis. This thesis is normally examined internally. Please refer to Part C for further information.

## Part C - PhD (Integrated) - Year 1 Thesis

(15) A PhD (Integrated) Year 1 Thesis is to be between 12,000 and 15,000 words and relate to a research project conceptualised as a sub-project of the planned PhD. Candidates will use the feedback received from the examiner(s) in the preparation of their candidature proposal and if approved, their overall PhD thesis.

(16) The Year 1 thesis is to be assessed at the level of AQF 9.

(17) PhD (Integrated) Candidates must submit their Year 1 Thesis by the due dates for the semester in which they are due to submit their Year 1 Thesis for examination.

(18) The Year 1 Thesis will be examined by a member of the candidate's supervisory team who has been involved in supervision during the Year 1 program. This name should be submitted to ORTQI (Academic Programs) no later than the commencement of the semester in which the Year 1 Thesis is to be submitted. All Year 1 Theses will also be moderated within ORTQI (Academic Programs).

(19) In cases where a candidate achieves a 70% average across the Coursework units but a grade of 45%–69% in the thesis, the candidate will be offered the opportunity to revise and resubmit the Year 1 Thesis, for maximum grades of 50%, in the case of a student achieving 45%-49%, and 70%, in the case of a student achieving 50%-69%. This will not involve a complete rewriting of the thesis, but the candidate will be required to address the Examiner’s numbered key concerns using track changes and outlining the responses and changes in the summary sheet. The revised thesis will be assessed by Academic Programs with this result being the higher of the two grades attained for the Year 1 Thesis.

(20) A PhD (Integrated) candidate who achieves a pass of 50% or above in all units including the Year 1 Thesis, but does not fulfil the hurdle requirement (70% average across the coursework units and 70% in the Year 1 Thesis) will be eligible for a Master of Research Practice exit award.

## Part D - Nomination of Examiners

(21) The specific requirements for each degree type are:

Degree	Traditional, Creative Project (no live component) and with Publications	Thesis by Creative Project (with a live performance and exhibition)
Doctoral degrees	Two appropriately qualified experts of international standing in their discipline/field.	Three appropriately qualified experts of international standing in their discipline (two plus a reserve).
Master Research Degrees	Two appropriately qualified experts of international standing in their discipline/field.	Three appropriately qualified experts of international standing in their discipline (two plus a reserve).

(22) For the submission of the final thesis, potential examiners should:

- a. be appropriately qualified experts of international standing in their discipline/field;
- b. be external to Victoria University (VU);
- c. normally be associated with a university or research institution;
- d. have demonstrated current research expertise relevant to the thesis;
- e. be free of conflict of interest in relation to the other examiner, the candidate, supervisors and University in accordance with the official University [Conflict of Interest in Thesis Examination Guidelines](#) at the time of nomination and throughout the examination process;
- f. have been advised and agree to examine the thesis on a confidential basis.

(23) Where the procedures (see clause 58) call for a replacement examiner/s, the Principal Supervisor will be contacted accordingly.

(24) Candidates will provide their Principal Supervisor with a list of suitable/unsuitable examiners for consideration and discussion, however, the Principal Supervisor is responsible for the final nomination of appropriate examiners.

(25) Prior to the final nominations to ORTQI, the Principal Supervisor must inform the candidate of their proposed nominations to ensure that any conflicts of interests are managed effectively.

(26) The Principal Supervisor should discuss and effectively manage any potential conflicts of interests with the advice of the Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee).

(27) The Principal Supervisor should establish that the nominated examiners will be available to assess the thesis at the anticipated time of submission, and are available to provide a report within a six-week time frame.

(28) The Principal Supervisor should establish that the nominated examiners will be required to re-examine the thesis if a 'deferred' recommendation is submitted, despite the individual examiner recommendation as per clause (96) (refer to Part H Examiner Recommendation and Overall Classification).

(29) The Principal Supervisor should establish that the nominated examiners will examine the thesis on a confidential basis. If the examination of a thesis is subject to further confidentiality obligations, the examiners will be asked to sign and return a "One Way Confidentiality Deed Poll" after they have been approved as an examiner.

(30) If it is known at the time of nomination that an examiner is not able to provide their report within a six-week period however the Principal Supervisor wishes to proceed with the nomination, the Principal Supervisor must seek written agreement with the candidate as to when they expect the report to be received. This should be provided with the nomination documentation.

## **Submission of Nominations**

(31) In nominating examiners to the Chair of Examiners, the Principal Supervisor must submit the following documentation:

- a. provide a copy of the draft thesis abstract;
- b. provide information about each nominated examiner that demonstrates their research and research training expertise in relation to the specific project, as well as their international standing in the field (usually no more than two pages per examiner);
- c. identify and declare any major or minor potential conflicts of interest in accordance with the University [Conflict of Interest in Thesis Examination Guidelines](#);
- d. confirm that the candidate is aware of the identity of the examiners (as per the [Nomination of Examiners application](#));
- e. confirm that the candidate (including the principal supervisor) will not contact the examiners during the examination process and thereafter until their thesis has been classified by the University. In the event contact is made with an examiner/s during the examination process, the examination will be null and void (as per the [Nomination of Examiners application](#));
- f. in the event that a replacement examiner is required after the thesis has initially been released for examination, a [Nomination of a Replacement Examiner form](#) will need to be submitted.

(32) The Chair of Examiners is required to rigorously assess the suitability of the nominated examiners as per the requirements as specified in clause (22) and may reasonably expect that a Principal Supervisor secure alternative examiner(s) if the nominated examiners are not deemed suitable.

(33) If examiners have not been nominated prior to the submission of the thesis for examination, ORTQI will contact the Principal Supervisor to ascertain when examiners will be appointed and inform the candidate that there is a delay to the nomination.

(34) When a Principal Supervisor has failed to nominate examiners two weeks after thesis submission, the Chair of Examiners will be responsible for assisting to identify potential examiners and ensuring that the completed [Nomination of Examiners application](#) is submitted to ORTQI no later than one month following thesis submission. In such cases, the Deputy Directors may nominate the Principal Supervisor for de-registration for failing to nominate examiners in a timely manner.

(35) As examiners are required to be affiliated with a university or research institution, only those email addresses associated with a university or research institution will be used for the delivery of the thesis to an approved examiner.

## Part E - Endorsement and Approval of Examiners

(36) The Chair of Examiners will review the suitability of examiners based on clause (22) and if appropriate, endorse the Principal Supervisor's recommendation of examiners. The nomination will be forwarded to ORTQI for further review by the Dean, Graduate Research. Examiners will only be considered as appointed when the Dean, Graduate Research has provided final approval.

(37) Only in exceptional and well documented circumstances will the Dean, Graduate Research approve two examiners currently employed by the same institution or with a prior close collaboration.

(38) If a Conflict of Interest arises during or after the examination, the Dean may annul one or both examiners' reports in which case replacement examiner(s) will be appointed as per clause (58).

(39) Once examiners are approved and the candidate has met all submission requirements as outlined in Part F, the thesis can be forwarded to the approved examiners.

## Part F - Submission of Theses for Examination

(40) Candidates are responsible for presenting their thesis in an academic register and format for higher degrees by research and to make the following declarations in relation to research compliance:

- a. ethical approval (if applicable);
- b. integrity and authenticity (candidates can check the originality of their thesis using Turnitin; refer to [Thesis Submission Requirements webpage](#));
- c. co-authorship (particularly but not solely in the case of Thesis with Publications); and
- d. Statement of level of editing (if applicable).

(41) Principal Supervisors are responsible for assessing the thesis is of an examinable standard and specifically that the thesis:

- a. has an appropriate academic register and format for a higher degree by research; and
- b. is research compliant as per clause (40).

(42) The following general requirements must be met for a thesis to be accepted by ORTQI for examination:

- a. the candidate must be currently enrolled;
- b. all required coursework and candidature milestones must be satisfactorily completed;
- c. the thesis title must be identical to the title registered with the University. Where there has been a change of title from that which was approved at candidature, candidates must confirm the change and the reasons for it on the [Release of Thesis form](#);
- d. the thesis must be accompanied by a completed and signed [Release of Thesis form](#) in which the Chair of Examiners endorses the Principal Supervisor's recommendation that the thesis is of examinable standard;
- e. the signed candidate declaration, using the approved [Student Declaration template](#) must be included in the thesis; and
- f. one PDF electronic copy of the thesis (unless requested otherwise).

(43) Once a candidate has submitted their thesis for examination, they are not required to re-enrol. They will, however, remain a candidate of the University until their thesis has been classified.

(44) International candidates who have submitted their thesis for examination are responsible for ensuring that their visa status is current and correct if they wish to remain in the country.

(45) Scholarship stipend payments will cease once the Release of Thesis is signed by the Chair of Examiners.

(46) If there is disagreement as to whether the thesis is of an examinable standard, the matter should be discussed among the candidate, supervisor(s), the Chair of Examiners and the Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee). If resolution cannot be found, the matter should be referred to the Dean, Graduate Research.

(47) In exceptional circumstances, if a candidate insists on submitting the thesis (or re-examined thesis) against the advice of their supervisors and Chair of Examiners, the candidate will be asked to sign a [declaration](#) that releases the University from any responsibility should the nominated examiners adversely appraise the thesis. The signed declaration should accompany the thesis. In this situation and where the thesis is being submitted for initial examination, the relevant Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee) will be responsible for nominating examiners. If the supervisor decides to withdraw their supervision at the point of thesis submission, the Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee) will also ensure supervisors are formally in place for when the examiners' recommendations are received.

### **Special Requirements for Submission of a Thesis by Creative Project**

(48) In all cases where the creative project does not include a live performance or exhibition, the three required components for submission, the Creative Component, the Analytical Written Component and the Thesis Abstract must be submitted simultaneously.

(49) ORTQI should be notified at least six months in advance of the timing of the initial presentation where the creative project involves a live performance or exhibition. The timing, in relation to the full submission of the Thesis by Creative Project for examination, will be planned and formal approval sought from the Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee), prior to the appointment of examiners and notification to the ORTQI.

(50) The formal submission of the Analytical Written Component may occur prior to, simultaneous with, or after the live performance or exhibition, but must occur no later than four calendar months following the conclusion of the live performance or exhibition. The scheduling of the live performance or exhibition must take this into account.

(51) All examiners will be provided with the Thesis Abstract no less than 10 University business days prior to their scheduled attendance at the live performance or exhibition. In addition, if the candidate has opted for the Analytical Written Component to be read prior to the viewing of the performance or exhibition, then this must also be provided no less than 10 University business days prior to the scheduled live performance or exhibition.

(52) If the candidate is unable to formally submit the written component of the work within four calendar months (regardless of EFT) of the live performance or exhibition then an [Application for Extension form](#) must be completed prior to the due date.

(53) Failure to formally submit the written component by the due date, or apply for an extension by the due date, will result in the commencement of Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings against the candidate.

## **Part G - Examination Process**

(54) The thesis will be forwarded to the approved examiners normally within five University business days following receipt of the thesis and/or approval of examiners. Examiners will be requested to confirm receipt of the thesis.

(55) Examiners are given six weeks from the date the thesis was dispatched to them (normally via email) to return their examination report. Examiners will receive a reminder from ORTQI after five weeks and contacted again once the six-week period has lapsed. In the event that an examiner's report has not been returned after 10 weeks, a replacement examiner is normally appointed.

(56) Examiners will receive the University's [examination guidelines](#) as well as any additional guidelines in relation to

the University's expectations of the standards and outcomes for that specific research degree.

(57) If a Conflict of Interest arises during the examination and/or classification processes, as per clause (38), the Dean, Graduate Research will be responsible for the appropriate management of the Conflict of Interest. This may include the appointment of replacement examiner(s).

(58) If, at any time, an examiner is no longer able to assess a thesis, a replacement examiner will be appointed. Supervisors will be required to discuss the nomination with the candidate as per clauses (24) and (25).

(59) Once the thesis is submitted for examination, at no time during the examination process should candidates or their supervisors contact the examiners as per clause (31e).

### **Examination of Theses that include a Live Performance or Exhibition**

(60) Examiners of Live Performances or Exhibitions will be advised of the format of the examinable work at the time of their engagement by the University, including when they will be required to attend a live performance or exhibition.

(61) One Reserve Examiner is appointed in the event that one of the two original examiners is for some reason unable to attend the exhibition or performance, or to complete other aspects of the examination process.

(62) All examiners including the Reserve Examiner are expected to attend the exhibition or performance of the candidate's creative work as a component of the thesis.

(63) The third examiner will be designated the Reserve Examiner. The Reserve Examiner is required to produce an examination report but the report will be for feedback only unless:

- a. a primary examiner is unable to attend a performance and ORTQI has been unable to contact another examiner; or
- b. a primary examiner has been able to attend the performance but unable to write a report on the performance project; or
- c. a primary examiner is late in providing a report on the performance project.

(64) The candidate will only receive the examination reports from the first two examiners unless:

- a. one of the original examiners has been replaced; or
- b. there is a divergent result between the first two examiners;

in which case they will receive all available examination reports.

(65) The examiners will write independent reports on the creative project, including a short description of the Creative Component and its execution, and provide their report and recommendation within six weeks of receiving the formal submission.

(66) At no time shall the examiners communicate with each other, the supervisor or the candidate about the live performance or exhibition until their the thesis has been classified.

## **Part H - Examiner Recommendations and Overall Classification**

### **Examiner Recommendations**

(67) Each examiner will make one of the following recommendations on the thesis/major work:

- a. PASSED without further correction; or
- b. PASSED, subject to minor corrections as outlined in the examiner's report;

- c. PASSED, subject to substantial amendments as outlined in the examiner's report;
- d. DEFERRED, with the candidate permitted to revise the thesis for re-examination;
- e. FAILED;
- f. PASSED (after re-examination);
- g. FAILED (after re-examination).

(68) The examiners' recommendations are used to determine the overall outcome of the examination of the thesis with the majority classification determining the overall outcome.

(69) Thesis Classification Outcomes as per Table 1

Table 1: Thesis Classifications

Recommendations for Thesis Classification	Thesis Classification
Based on a combination of passed recommendations without further correction and/or minor corrections.	Passed
Based on a combination passed recommendations including without further correction, minor corrections and/or substantial amendments.	Passed
Based on a combination of passed after re-examination(s).	Passed
Based on at least a majority of recommendations of failed, and/or failed after re-examination(s).	Failed

(70) Examiners are also asked to assess the quality of the thesis and the generic attributes of the candidate. In addition, Examiners of Research Masters Degrees will be asked to submit a mark in accordance with the VU grading assessments.

## Examiners' Reports Received

(71) Once all required examiners' reports are obtained, ORTQI will send the examiners' reports to the candidate, copied to the Supervisors and Chair of Examiners, advising them of the overall thesis recommendation (i.e, passed, deferred or failed).

(72) All candidates are required to comprehensively respond to the examiners' reports, without omitting/ignoring any comment, using the Response to Examiner Template and revising their thesis accordingly. In the case of a re-examined thesis that has been passed by a third examiner, the candidate will only be required to respond to the third examiner for the classification process, see clause (106).

(73) Where an examiner recommends a change to the thesis title, the candidate must document their response in the Response to Examiner Template.

(74) The University will pay examiners on receipt of their examination report an honorarium rate, set in accordance by the [Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee](#).

(75) Where a candidate has failed to submit the revised thesis within the timeframe that applies to the outcome of their examination and apply for an extension, the Institute will commence Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings (as per [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#)).

## Response to Examiners

(76) Candidates must refer to Table 2 below to comply with response timelines to submit for classification.



Table 2: Overview of Response Timelines to Submit for Classification

	Requirement to re-enrol	Timelines for Amendment	Approval on Response Approach	Academic Recommending Classification	Academic Approving Classification
Passed: based on a combination of passed recommendations without further correction and/or minor corrections	No	six weeks	Principal Supervisor	Chair of Examiners	Dean, Graduate Research
Passed: Based on Passed recommendations including without further correction, minor corrections and/or substantial amendments.	No	three months	Principal Supervisor and Chair of Examiners	Academic Review Panel	Dean, Graduate Research
Deferred	Yes	Up to 12 months	Principal Supervisor and Chair of Examiners	NA	NA
Passed: After Re-examination	No	one month	Principal Supervisor	Deputy Director	Dean, Graduate Research

**Passed: based on a combination of Passed recommendations without further correction and/or minor corrections**

(77) Candidates whose thesis is in this category are not required to re-enrol but still have access to supervision and the library until the time their thesis is classified or their degree is conferred.

(78) Candidates have six weeks from when they received their examiners' reports to submit their completed classification documentation to ORTQI.

(79) After discussing the reports with their Supervisors, candidates in this category revise their thesis, if required, and prepare their Response to Examiners to the satisfaction of their Supervisors.

(80) If the candidate requires additional time to revise their thesis and respond to examiners, the candidate must complete [Application for Extension form](#) within two weeks of receiving their examiners' reports. Normally no more than four additional weeks will be granted and only in exceptional/extenuating circumstances.

**Passed: based on Passed recommendations including without further correction, minor corrections and/or substantial amendments.**

(81) Candidates whose thesis is in this category are not required to re-enrol but still have access to supervision and the library until the time their thesis is classified or their degree is conferred.

(82) Candidates have three months from when they received their examiners' reports to submit their completed classification documentation to ORTQI.

(83) After discussing the reports with their Supervisors, candidates and their supervisors are required to discuss and agree on their approach to responding to the Examiners' reports with the Chair of Examiners.

(84) Once the approach is agreed upon, candidates are required to complete their Response to Examiners and revise their thesis both to the satisfaction of their Supervisor and Chair of Examiners. The Chair of Examiners may reasonably

request further changes to be made to the thesis and related documentation prior to classification.

(85) If the candidate requires additional time to revise their thesis and respond to examiners, the candidate must complete the [Application for Extension form](#) two weeks prior to the due date. Normally no more than four additional weeks will be granted.

## **Re-examination of a Deferred Thesis**

(86) If the majority of examiners recommend that the thesis be deferred, then the candidate will be required to re-enrol by the date stipulated by ORTQI after which they normally have a maximum of 12 months to undertake a major re-write of the thesis and submit their revised thesis for re-examination.

(87) After discussing the reports with their Supervisors, the candidate and their Principal Supervisor are required to meet with the Chair of Examiners within two weeks after re-enrolment to agree on the approach to be adopted for undertaking a major re-write of the thesis.

(88) Should the candidate fail to re-[Reinstatement of Candidature](#) should they wish to submit for re-examination.

(89) No extension to the period of re-enrolment or leave of absence within the enrolment will be granted.

(90) If the candidate has exceeded the timely duration for their degree of more than one semester, upon re-enrolment, they will incur tuition fees as per the current domestic rate or international rate (as applicable to enrolment status). Post-timely duration fees will be incurred as per [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 3 Pre-Candidature and Candidature](#).

(91) If an international candidate does not pay the fees by the due date or apply for additional time in which to pay the tuition fee under [Exceptional Circumstances Fee Extension](#), they will be issued a 20 day notice of the University's intention to cancel their enrolment. Once the notice expires, the candidate's enrolment and their electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE) will be cancelled due to non-payment and reported to the Department of Home Affairs.

(92) Domestic candidate may be eligible to apply for [FEE-HELP](#). If a domestic candidate does not pay fees by the due date or defer the payment via FEE-HELP (if eligible) or apply for a Fee Extension to defer the payment until the census date, their enrolment will be cancelled due to non-payment.

(93) Failure to resubmit the thesis for re-examination within the agreed timelines will result in Unsatisfactory Progress proceedings being invoked as per [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 4 Progress](#).

(94) If there are extenuating circumstance that lead to a candidate requiring more than 12 months to make changes to the thesis prior to submitting it for re-examination, the candidate must submit the [Application for Extension form](#) to ORTQI no later than two weeks prior to their original deadline. The candidate may be granted up to three additional months by the Deputy Director, Research Institute (or nominee) due to exceptional/extenuating circumstances.

(95) Candidates submitting their thesis for re-examination must complete the Response to Examiner template outlining the substantive changes made to their thesis. This documentation will be forwarded to the examiners with the resubmitted thesis, along with:

- a. Original Examiner Reports (alternate examiner reports will be de-identified)
- b. New Examiner Report Template
- c. Honorarium documents

(96) At the time of re-examination, the candidate must ensure that the revised thesis demonstrates they have met the criteria as stated in [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 8 Thesis Requirements](#) - Part C Broad Thesis Requirements

by HDR Degree.

(97) All examiners will be sent the documentation as per clause (95) and will only be able to grade the thesis as 'passed after re-examination' or 'failed after re-examination.'

(98) In the event there is a divergent result in relation to the re-examined thesis (i.e. one pass and one fail recommendation), a third examiner will be appointed and all three reports will contribute to the examination outcome. The examiner will recommend either:

- a. pass the thesis with no, minor or substantial amendments; or
- b. fail the thesis.

(99) The third examiner will be given six weeks from the date of dispatch of the thesis to return their examiner report with a recommendation of either clauses (98a) or (98b). To ensure an unbiased approach to the examination of the candidate's thesis, the examiner will be sent the following documentation:

- a. Original Examiner Reports (alternate examiner reports will be de-identified)
- b. New Examiner Report Template
- c. Honorarium documents

(100) Where an examiner(s) who originally examined the thesis is unable to re-examine the revised thesis, a replacement examiner will be appointed and will be advised at the time of appointment that they are examining a revised thesis. The examiner will make a recommendation as per clauses (98a) or (98b) and to ensure an unbiased approach to the examination of the candidate's thesis, receive the documentation in accordance to clause (99a-c).

### **Passed: After Re-examination**

(101) Candidates whose re-submitted thesis has been passed after re-examination are not required to re-enrol and will still have access to supervision until the time of classification and the library until their degree is conferred.

(102) Where a thesis has been passed after re-examination by two examiners, the thesis will be passed. Candidates will have one month from the date they received their final examiners reports to submit for [Recommendation on Classification](#) documentation to ORTQI.

(103) Where a third examiner was required for a classification outcome to be determined and the re-submitted thesis was passed by the third examiner, candidates are required to revise their thesis and submit their completed classification documentation to ORTQI. Candidates are only required to respond to the examiners who passed the thesis.

(104) If, in extenuating circumstances, the candidate requires additional time to revise their thesis and submit their completed classification documentation to ORTQI, the candidate must complete the [Application for Extension form](#) within two weeks of receiving their examiners' reports. Normally no more than four additional weeks will be granted.

### **Failed Recommendation**

(105) If the majority of examiners recommend that the thesis be failed, this will be conveyed to the supervisory team, Chair of Examiners and Deputy Director in the first instance. The principal supervisor will be responsible to convey the recommendation to the candidate and notify ORTQI when this has been actioned.

(106) Upon notification to ORTQI that the candidate has received the recommendation, the recommendation will be conveyed to the Research and Research Training Committee if clause (125) is not invoked by the candidate.

## Part I - Thesis Classification

(107) In the case of all degrees, the classification will be simply 'Passed' or 'Failed' and the result recorded on the transcript will be S (ungraded pass) or U (ungraded fail).

(108) In the case where the thesis has been classified as 'Failed':

- a. the result will be recorded as such following the three-week period allocated to candidates to appeal the overall outcome;
- b. the thesis cannot be revised and resubmitted for any other research degree at VU.

(109) In the case of candidates sponsored by DFAT, ORTQI will endeavour to ensure that the thesis is classified within the required timeframe.

### Classification Documentation

(110) The following documentation is required for classification of a passed thesis:

- a. [Recommendation on Classification](#)
- b. Supporting letter/memo from the Principal Supervisor
- c. Summary of Responses to Examiners Reports
- d. Thesis citation in electronic format template
- e. Amended Thesis

(111) ORTQI will forward the completed classification documents for overall passed theses as per Table 3.

(112) Academic(s) recommending classification will be provided with the complete set of classification documents.

Table 3: Classification Pathway for Passed Theses

	Academic(s) Recommending Classification	Academic Approving Classification
Passed: based on a combination of passed recommendations without further correct and/or minor corrections.	Chair of Examiners	Dean, Graduate Research
Passed: Based on Passed recommendations including without further correction, minor corrections and/or substantial amendments.	Academic Review Panel	
Passed: After Re-examination.	Chair of Examiners	

(113) In the case of theses:

- a. passed, based on a combination of passed recommendations without further correction and/or minor corrections; or
- b. passed after re-examination,

after reviewing and being satisfied with the thesis and related documentation, the Chair of Examiners will make a recommendation to the Dean, Graduate Research that the thesis be classified as passed. The Dean, Graduate Research will review the Recommendation of Classification application and the submitted thesis.

(114) In the case of theses passed, based on a combination of passed recommendations including without further

correction, minor corrections and/or substantial amendments, after reviewing and being satisfied with all documentation including the final version, the Academic Review Panel (ARP), via the Chair on behalf of the ARP, will recommend the Dean, Graduate Research (or nominee) approves the classification.

(115) An ARP will normally be comprised of two members nominated by the Dean, Graduate Research:

- a. a senior academic (Level D or E) from the candidate's Research Institute who is an experienced Principal supervisor, normally Level 3, and who has not had any association with the thesis (Chair);
- b. a Deputy Director Research Institute in which the candidate is not associated.

(116) The ARP, via the Chair, or the Deputy Director Research Institute, may reasonably request further changes to be made to the thesis and related documentation prior to classification. The changes must be made and the revised thesis and paperwork submitted within one month (EFT) of the notification, otherwise Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings will be invoked.

(117) Where any candidate has been the subject of Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings and their thesis is subsequently submitted to an ARP for classification, an individual who participated in the Unsatisfactory Progress Proceedings cannot serve as a member of that Panel.

(118) Once the Dean, Graduate Research (or nominee) has approved the classification of the thesis, ORTQI will notify the candidate in writing of the requirement to supply an electronic (PDF) copy of the final version of the thesis and completed VU Research Repository form by the date stipulated. This is a prerequisite in order to be eligible to graduate. If restricting access to the thesis, a [Restricted Access to a Thesis form](#) should be lodged with the completed VURR. Failure to provide the completed [Restricted Access to a Thesis form](#) will result in the thesis being available in the Library repository 24 months from conferral of the award.

(119) Once the candidate's thesis has been classified, all candidate entitlements, including any allocated study space will cease as per the [Space Allocation Guidelines](#).

## **Restricted Access to a Thesis**

(120) Where there are commercial intellectual property issues, or the circumstances of the research project warrant the imposition of a measure of secrecy, the candidate may discuss with the supervisory team restricting partial or full access to the thesis. Candidates should consider whether restricting access would impede their ability to publish their research or to make their work and achievements known to potential employers. A thesis can be restricted for up to two years. In exceptional circumstances, a further extension to restrict access may be granted.

(121) The completed [Restricted Access to a Thesis form](#) is submitted with the electronic copy to the ORTQI as per clause (118). The Dean, Graduate Research approves applications for restricted access to a thesis. If approved, the ORTQI notifies the candidate, supervisory team and the library.

(122) Once the restricted period has lapsed, the thesis will become available to the public unless the candidate reapplies for a further extension.

## **Part J - Appeals**

### **Appeal on Examiner Recommendations**

(123) In the event of an appeal of the overall examination outcome, the process as outlined in clauses (124-142) of this procedure must be followed.

(124) An appeal must be on one or more of the following grounds:

- a. procedural irregularities in the examination process;
- b. evidence of prejudice or bias in the examination process.

## **Lodgement of Notice of Appeal**

(125) A candidate who wishes to appeal the recommendation of the examination outcome must lodge a notice of appeal with the Manager, Graduate Research Admissions & Candidature within 15 University business days of the original decision.

(126) The notice of appeal must clearly state the ground(s) for appeal, summarising the basis for each ground(s) and include any relevant material on which the candidate wishes to rely.

(127) The Manager, Graduate Research Admissions & Candidature will refer the matter to the Chair of the Research and Research Training Committee.

## **Appeal Chair of Panel**

(128) The Chair of the Research and Research Training Committee, or nominee, is the Chair of the HDR Examination Appeal Panel (HDR EAP). The Chair will be administratively supported by the Manager, Graduate Research Admissions & Candidature (or nominee).

## **Functions of the HDR EAP Chair**

(129) The HDR EAP Chair will consider the notice of appeal and any relevant supporting documents and take any of the following actions:

- a. if she or he considers that the appeal lacks merit, the Chair may dismiss the appeal without referring the matter to a HDR EAP for hearing;
- b. if she or he considers that a clear error or procedural deficiency has occurred, the Chair may remit the matter back to the original decision maker/s for reconsideration, with guidance on how to remedy the error or procedural deficiency; or
- c. refer the appeal to HDR EAP for hearing in accordance with this Procedure.

(130) Having regard for the need for fairness to both the University and the HDR candidate and pending the final determination of the matter, the Chair may also make one or more of the following interim directions:

- a. to suspend the implementation of the decision that is the subject of the appeal; or,
- b. any other direction that may be reasonable in all the circumstances.

## **Appeal Panel Composition**

(131) An Appeal Panel will be elected by the Chair, Research and Research Training Committee or nominee and must consist of five persons (including the Chair) as follows:

- a. Panel Chair: Chair of the Research and Research Training Committee, or nominee;
- b. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, or nominee
- c. A Deputy Director of a Research Institute other than that in which the candidate is associated, or nominee;
- d. A senior researcher from Research Institute in which the candidate is associated;
- e. Academic Board's Graduate Research Student representative, or nominee.

(132) The appeal will be treated as an academic matter for the purposes of the composition of the HDR EAP.

(133) Wherever practical, the membership of the HDR EAP will remain the same throughout the hearing of the matter notwithstanding any adjournment.

(134) The HDR EAP must not include anyone who has, or who may reasonably be perceived to have, a bias or conflict of interest in the matter.

(135) The candidate will be notified of the composition of the HDR EAP and this can only be challenged if evidence is provided to the Chair, prior to the hearing, detailing perceived prejudice or bias against the candidate.

## **Appeal Hearing**

(136) Unless agreed otherwise, a candidate making an appeal will receive at least 10 working days' notice of the hearing of the appeal.

(137) In determining an appeal, the HDR EAP -

- a. will make a majority rule decision;
- b. will act impartially and fairly in all circumstances;
- c. may follow any procedure it considers appropriate;
- d. will not be bound by legal rules of evidence, technicalities or legal forms, and may inform itself in relation to any matter in any manner it thinks fits;
- e. will give the candidate the opportunity to present material and submissions (either in person or in writing) in support of the appeal and to respond to any other material relating to the appeal;
- f. will consider any material presented or made available to it; and
- g. will allow the candidate to have a support person and/or to be assisted with the preparation and presentation of their case by a student advocate, provided that the support person or student advocate is not -
  - i. an Australian legal practitioner, unless with leave of the Chair; or
  - ii. involved or alleged to be involved in the matter being determined.

## **Decision**

(138) Following the hearing, the HDR EAP must -

- a. allow the appeal in whole or in part; or
- b. dismiss the appeal.

(139) If the appeal is dismissed, the HDR EAP must confirm the original decision.

(140) If the appeal is upheld, the HDR EAP will:

- a. set aside the failed classification; and
- b. may either -
  - i. annul the examination in its entirety and direct a re-examination of the current thesis;
  - ii. substitute the overall classification with an overall pass classification, which may be subject to no, minor or substantial amendments as set out by the HDR EAP.

(141) Following the decision of the HDR EAP, the Chair of the HDR EAP must provide written notification of the decision within five University business days, to:

- a. the candidate; and
- b. the Manager Admissions and Candidature; and

- c. the Dean, Graduate Research who will inform the Research and Research Training Committee of a Failed Thesis if the appeal is dismissed.

(142) The decision of the HDR EAP will be final and there is no further avenue for appeal within Victoria University. If the candidate wishes to seek an external review of the University decision, refer to the [Student Appeals Procedure](#), Part E - External Appeal.

## **Part K - Conferral of Award**

(143) The Dean, Graduate Research provides a list of candidates who have been classified as having satisfied all the requirements for the award to University Council, who authorises the conferral of the awards, for HDR degrees.

(144) The Dean, Graduate Research provides the Research and Research Training Committee, for transmission to the Academic Board, with an annual report on the examination and classification process and the quality of the outcomes achieved.

(145) On confirmation of receipt of the electronic copy of the thesis by ORTQI and conferral by the University, a Notice of Completion, academic transcript and an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS) are generated by Assessments and Completions and forwarded to the graduand.

(146) Following conferral, doctoral candidates may use the title "Dr".

(147) The graduand will be invited to participate in the next round of graduation ceremonies where the testamur will be presented. Candidates who graduate in absentia can organise for their testamur to be collected from campus or mailed for a fee.

(148) Candidates only need to apply to graduate if they are enrolled in a course and wish to exit this course with a lower (alternate) award. In this instance, candidates will need to complete the Application for an Award Alternate Exit form.

## **Part L - Conflict of Roles**

(149) No individual may be involved in dual or multiple roles. Where the potential for a conflict of roles exists the following alternate delegations will normally apply:

- a. For Deputy Director, Research Institutes who is also the Principal Supervisor - The Dean, Graduate Research (or their nominee; normally a senior academic).
- b. For the Dean, Graduate Research who is also the Principal Supervisor - Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research or nominee.



## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	14th October 2020
<b>Review Date</b>	14th October 2023
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
<b>Approval Date</b>	9th October 2020
<b>Expiry Date</b>	18th May 2021
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Andrew Hill Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Impact Andrew.Hill@vu.edu.au
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