

THESIS EXAMINATION

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Thesis Examination

- By the time you have listened to this talk you will understand:
- The nature of JCU thesis examination process
- What you need to do for your thesis to be examined
- How to respond to examiners' recommendations

Examination process

- JCU doctoral and research masters theses are examined by at least 2 external examiners.
 - Doctoral theses can be examined by 3 examiners
 - Most theses examined by 2 external examiners
- Each examiner normally provided with e-thesis
- Examiners are asked to submit:
 - **summative recommendation + formative narrative report**
- Examiners asked to submit report within 6 weeks and GRS makes every effort to ensure this happens
- Examiners can be recalcitrant and it may be necessary to appoint replacement examiner

Choosing examiners

- At or before Pre-Completion Evaluation, candidate and Advisory Panel jointly identify a pool of 4-5 possible examiners
- Final examiners selected from this pool by Dean of College (or their nominee)
- If candidate has concerns about any potential examiner, advise GRS in writing
- Advisory Panel required to confirm in writing that the nominated examiners have no conflicts of interest with **candidate, Advisory Panel or JCU** (checked by GRS independently and in formal letter inviting them to be thesis examiner)
- Final examiners approved by Dean, Graduate Research

Qualities of good examiners

- Expertise in the general area of the topic
- Expertise in thesis examination
- Reasonable person
- No conflict of interest with the HDR Candidate, advisory tem or university

Including an oral examination: Why?

- Unlikely to change outcome but
- Educationally rewarding and personally satisfying finale to your candidacy
- Benefit of advice from an external expert in the field of the thesis who has read the thesis
- Clarification of points of principle or of detail in the thesis
- Assessment of candidate's contribution to the content and presentation of the thesis (important if you include multi-authored papers)
- A firm deadline for the preparation of examiners' reports
- Norm in many countries
- Under consideration at many universities in Australia

Including an oral examination: What's involved

- At least one examiner must agree to participate in the oral examination on the agreed date prior to agreeing to examine the thesis.
- A copy of thesis sent to the examiners as per standard procedure
- Each examiner's report includes questions to be asked during the oral examination
- Questions provided to candidate prior to the oral examination which may be conducted in person or by telecommunications
- Oral examination attended by a trained facilitator, at least one examiner and candidate and normally lasts 1-2 hours

Thesis submission

- Submit an electronic copy (PDF) of your thesis to the HDR Administrator, in your College.
- Complete forms that must be submitted with the thesis
- GRS will then formally approach the nominated examiners when they receive the thesis + forms
- GRS will advise when the thesis has been sent to examiners
- All communication regarding the examination(s) of the thesis must be through GRS

What examiners do?

- (1) be broadly consistent
- (2) expect a thesis to be passable
- (3) judge a thesis by the end of the first or second chapter
- (4) read a thesis as an academic reader and as a normal reader
- (5) be irritated and distracted by presentation errors
- (6) favour a coherent thesis
- (7) favour a thesis that engages with the literature
- (8) favour a thesis with a convincing approach
- (9) favour a thesis that engages with the findings
- (10) require a thesis to contain publishable findings
- (11) give summative and formative feedback

Summative recommendations

- NA: The thesis/exegesis may be passed with no requirement for correction or amendments.
- MA: The thesis/exegesis may be passed after the candidate has made the minor textual corrections recommended by the examiner to the satisfaction of the College.

Summative recommendations

- SA(A): The thesis/exegesis may be passed without further examination provided that the candidate has rewritten specific sections of the thesis identified by the examiner to the satisfaction of the College Dean. **This rewriting (which may include some reanalysis) will clarify but not change the substantive conclusions of the thesis.**
- SA(B): The thesis may be passed provided that the candidate has rewritten specific sections of the thesis/exegesis identified by the examiner, to the examiner's satisfaction. The examiner has requested to see the rewritten sections. **This rewriting (which may include some reanalysis) will not change the substantive conclusions of the thesis.**

Summative recommendations

- RR: The candidate should not be admitted to the degree on the basis of this thesis/exegesis, which contains flaws **that have the potential to affect its substantive conclusions**. However, if the additional work is done as specified, the thesis is likely to fulfil the requirements of the degree.
- FAIL: The candidate should not be admitted to the degree on the basis of this thesis/exegesis, which does not meet the criteria of the degree as specified by the University. **These flaws are irredeemable and make it inappropriate to award the degree for this work.**

Amount of work required for revisions

Summative recommendation	Maximum F/T work time for revision	Maximum time for revision allowed by GRS
NA	0	N/A
MA	1 week	6 weeks
SA(a)	6 weeks	6 weeks
SA(b)	6 weeks	6 weeks
RR	3 months	3-6* months

*6 months if 2 RR

JCU HDR Thesis Examiners' Reports Results 2014-2018

Passable (changes managed by JCU)	1252	92.9%
NA	247	18.3%
MA	607	45.0%
SA(a)	398	29.5%
Potentially passable (examiner involved)	90	6.6%
SA(b)	49	3.6%
RR	41	3.0%
Fail	6	0.4%
Total	1348	

Fate of candidates for which at least one examiner recommended SAB,RR,F

- 175 students out of 1101 who submitted HDR thesis 2007-2017 received at least one SAB,RR, or F recommendation
- 161 subsequently completed successfully
- 10 never completed
- 4 exited with an alternative degree
- failure rate -14/1101 or 1.3%

Most HDRs who fail to complete—DROP OUT WITHOUT SUBMITTING THESIS

However some who receive critical examiner's reports never complete

Best to get your thesis right before submission

Examiners' reports

- When all examiners' reports received by GRS, usually released immediately to candidate
- If one or both of the examiners recommend:
 - 'SA(b) passages to be revised to the satisfaction of the examiner'
 - 'RR revise and resubmit'
- In such cases, reports usually released to candidate via Primary Advisor, who should talk with candidate about them
- If an examiner recommends 'FAIL' (very rare), the reports will go to the Research Education Sub-Committee (Executive) first

Matrix of outcomes of thesis examination

Recommendations		Examination 1					
		NA	MA	SAa	SAb	RR	F
Exam. - 2	NA	A	B	B	C	C*	D*
	MA	B	B	B	C	C*	D*
	Sa(a)	B	B	B	C	C*	D*
	Sa(b)	C	C	C	C	C	D*
	RR	C*	C*	C*	C	C	D*
	F	D*	D*	D*	D*	D*	D

*Circumstances in which it is legitimate for the candidate and their Advisors to formally request the Research Education Sub-Committee Executive to approve an adjudicator or in exceptional circumstances a new examiner

Responding to examiners' reports

- All examiners recommend PASS
 - Candidates makes recommended amendments prior to submitting a final thesis copy to Dean of College (or nominee) for checking and signoff.
 - Summarise amendments preferably in a table with the following format:
 - examiner's recommendation:
 - referenced page number in original thesis copy
 - candidate's response, and referenced page number in revised thesis copy.
 - If candidate disagrees with a recommendation of an examiner they can refute it in a neutral tone

Examiners ask to see revised thesis

- Revised passages for checking by examiner
 - Respond as for all examiners requesting pass
 - Take particular care to ensure that summary response table is neutral in tone and suitable for return to the examiner
 - If response table is comprehensive examiner may not require to see revised thesis Revise and re-submit for further examination
 - Candidature Committee is invited to work with candidate to develop Evaluation of Examiner Recommendations for the University's Research Education Sub-Committee (Executive), who will consider the examiners' reports and the rejoinder before deciding on the next steps
- In most such cases, the candidate will be required to revise and resubmit their thesis for further examination. Evaluation of Examiner Recommendations will be sent to the examiner(s) requesting 'revise and resubmit' with revised thesis and table of revisions unless examiner(s) advise that they will be unavailable

Examiner's make different recommendations

- If discrepancies cannot be resolved, the University's Research Education Sub-Committee (Executive) may invite an adjudicator to evaluate the examiners' reports and rejoinder
- **Adjudicator not an additional examiner**
- JCU normally seeks additional examiner only if one or more examiners submit an inadequate report (rare)
- Under these circumstances, the Research Education Sub-Committee (Executive) may decide that the inadequate report(s) be set aside

Important information

Go to the GRS website and read:

- [HDR Thesis Preparation Guidelines](#)
- [HDR Nomination of Examiners Procedure](#)
- [HDR Thesis Submission and Examination Procedure](#)
- [HDR Consideration of Examiner Reports Procedure](#)
- [HDR Guidelines for Conducting an Oral Thesis Examination](#)
- [HDR Library Thesis Deposit Procedure](#)
- [Notice of Intention to Submit Thesis Form](#)
- [NEX-FORM-01 HDR Nomination of Examiners Form](#)
- [SUB-FORM-01 HDR Thesis Submission and Release Form](#)
- [TEX-FORM-01 HDR Thesis Examination Form](#)