Graduate Research Examinations Procedure - Thesis Requirements, Submission and Retention

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Academic – Academic Board
Accountable Executive – Policy	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Responsible Manager – Policy	Senior Manager, Graduate and Global Research
Review Date	18 March 2027

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Procedure and its associated schedule and guidelines outline the requirements for the preparation, submission and depositing of theses for all graduate research degrees.

(2) These Procedures are to be read in conjunction with the Graduate Research Examinations Policy.

(3) As prescribed in the Graduate Research Examinations Policy, the Board of Graduate Research (BGR) determines the conditions under which graduate research theses are examined. The examinations are administered by the Graduate Research School (GRS).

(4) The Graduate Research Examinations Policy specifies two modes of submission:

a. Thesis mode of submission
b. Practice-based mode of submission

Section 3 - Scope

(5) Refer to the Graduate Research Examinations Policy.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Thesis written in a language other than English	Chair, Board of Graduate Research
Certify thesis can be submitted for examination in absence of principal supervisor's support	Chair, Board of Graduate Research
Recommendation of award of degree to Academic Board	Chair, Board of Graduate Research
Approval for restricted access to thesis	Chair, Board of Graduate Research

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Section 5 - Policy Statement

(6) This procedure forms part of the Graduate Research Examinations Policy suite which governs its application.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Standard of Work

(7) La Trobe University is bound by the Qualification Type Specifications outlined in the Australian Qualifications Framework. In relation to graduate research degrees, supervisors must guide their candidates to conduct research and prepare theses appropriate for the level of the degree.

(8) Graduates of a Masters by research degree will have (and demonstrate in their thesis) a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in one or more disciplines.

(9) Graduates of a doctoral degree will have (and demonstrate in their thesis) a substantial body of knowledge at the frontier of a field of work or learning, including knowledge that constitutes an original contribution.

(10) The detailed criteria for examination of theses are outlined in the Graduate Research Examinations Policy.

Part B - Prior Work

(11) The majority of work presented in the thesis, in either mode of submission, must be based on research undertaken during candidature at either La Trobe or another university if the candidate has transferred from another university. No work submitted for any other degree or diploma may be presented for assessment. Candidates may refer to work submitted for the award of another degree with appropriate citation.

(12) Where a thesis contains publications candidates may not include any papers submitted or published prior to their candidature, unless they are transferring from a degree at the same level from another university.

Part C - Language of Thesis

Approvals

(13) Any thesis submitted to fulfil the requirements of a graduate research degree must normally be written in English, unless a candidate has already been authorised under the terms of a joint degree by higher research or cotutelle arrangement to do otherwise.

(14) Where any other candidate wishes to write a thesis in a Language Other Than English (LOTE), approval must be sought from the Chair, BGR via the principal supervisor and the School Director of Graduate Research (DGR) (or nominee). This would normally occur as part of the admission process or at the time of the first progress report but must occur prior to confirmation of candidature.

(15) Approval will only be given to write a thesis in a LOTE where:

a. the use of that language can be justified by the candidate and the principal supervisor as being intrinsic to the topic of the thesis; and
b. the principal supervisor can provide evidence that examiners will be available to assess the thesis in the nominated language.

(16) A candidate's lack of proficiency with the English language is not an appropriate reason for seeking to write the

thesis in a LOTE.

Requirements

(17) The approval to proceed does not obviate the need for the candidate to meet the English language admission requirements for their degree.

(18) Title and synopsis requirements for the presentation of a thesis in a LOTE are outlined in the Graduate Research Examinations - Schedule B - Presentation of Theses for Graduate Research Degrees.

(19) Examiners' reports must be written in English.

(20) The citation required for graduation must be in English.

Part D - Formatting, Structure and Content

(21) The detailed requirements for the presentation of a thesis for both modes of submission, including maximum word length, format, structure and content of the thesis are prescribed in the Graduate Research Examinations - Schedule B - Presentation of Theses for Graduate Research Degrees.

(22) The detailed requirements for the other examinable components of practice-based mode are outlined in the Guidelines for Examinable Components of Practice-Based Degrees by Research.

Part E - Editing of Theses

Guidelines

(23) Candidates may seek input from a professional editor or digital assistance tools, such as large language models (LLMs), prior to submission of their thesis for examination.

(24) Theses must be edited according to the Guidelines for Editing Research Theses which form part of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice.

(25) Professional editorial intervention or the use of digital assistance tools should be restricted to copyediting and proofreading. Where a professional editor or digital assistance tool provides advice on matters of structure, examples only should be given.

(26) The candidate must consider whether to accept each suggested editorial change.

(27) Any intervention beyond copyediting and proofreading may be considered a breach of research integrity and managed under the Research Higher Degree Student Misconduct Procedure.

(28) Any use of Artificial Intelligence(AI) tools in conducting the research presented in the thesis should be carried out in accordance with the Research Integrity Policy and its use should be explained in the thesis.

(29) Where a thesis contains culturally or legally sensitive material, or if there are intellectual property agreements in place, or there are commercial-in-confidence agreements with industry partners, candidates should consult with their principal supervisor before employing the services of a professional editor or using a digital assistance tool.

Requirements

(30) The name of the editor or digital assistance tool and a brief description of the service rendered should be included in the acknowledgements or other prefatory matter of the thesis when it is presented for examination.

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Part F - Preparation for Submission

Notice of Intention to Submit

(31) The following procedures apply to submission for examination and again for any re-submission for examination that may be required.

(32) A candidate must submit a Notice of Intention to submit (NOI) form, endorsed by their principal supervisor and DGR (or nominee) to the GRS, providing the anticipated submission date and a summary of the thesis.

a. In the thesis mode, this form will normally be completed no later than one month prior to the planned submission date of the thesis.
b. In the practice-based mode, where the examiners will attend an exhibition or any other event that comprises part of the material or activity to be examined, this form must be completed no later than three months prior to the planned event.

(33) The receipt of this form triggers the recruitment of examiners according to the Graduate Research Examinations Procedure - Appointment of Examiners.

Authority to Submit

(34) One week prior to submission of the thesis the candidate will normally seek their principal supervisor's endorsement of the Authority to Submit (ATS) form. In signing this form, the principal supervisor is not suggesting the outcome of the examination, but they are agreeing that they have seen a final copy of the candidate's thesis and that, in their opinion:

a. the thesis is ready for examination; and
b. the thesis complies with the provisions of the relevant Graduate Research Examinations - Schedule B - Presentation of Theses for Graduate Research Degrees

(35) In the case of doctorates with coursework requirements, the principal supervisor must also certify that the coursework requirements have been completed.

(36) All doctoral candidates are required to submit a 50-word citation summarising their thesis in lay terms on the ATS form. The citation is incorporated in the documentation for graduation, irrespective of whether the candidate chooses to attend a graduation in person.

(37) Following endorsement by the DGR (or nominee) the Authority to Submit form is submitted to the GRS.

(38) If the supervisor declines to certify that a thesis is ready for submission a candidate may request that the Board of Graduate Research accept a thesis for examination without the approval of the supervisor.

(39) Where a supervisor declines to certify that a thesis is ready for submission, the supervisor must provide a statement in writing outlining their reasons for declining their support. This statement must be provided to the candidate and authorised by the DGR (or nominee).

(40) Each application in these circumstances is assessed on its merits by the Chair, BGR. The Chair may consider any implications for the reputation of the University. The candidate and supervisor will be informed whether the thesis will be examined.

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Part G - Submission for Examination

(41) Following receipt of the ATS form, the GRS will:

a. check the candidate's enrolment and any fee or financial sanctions that might apply. Any necessary action will be taken to correct enrolment details and to advise the candidate to settle any outstanding debts with the University;
b. check any special requirements that any of the confirmed examiners may have and advise the candidate and supervisor.

(42) Where the initial examination outcome was a deferral, and a candidate is then re-submitting their revised thesis for re-examination, they should also include the completed revision plan that details how the examiners' concerns were addressed in the revised thesis.

(43) Where an examiner(s) requests a hard copy of the thesis, either before or after submission for examination, it is the candidate's responsibility to provide the requested number of bound copies in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Graduate Research Examinations - Schedule B - Presentation of Theses for Graduate Research Degrees.

(44) Where a candidate has outstanding fees to the University or other financial sanctions a thesis may proceed to examination. The candidate will be advised of any amendments that may be required after examination, but award of the degree will not be recommended until all sanctions are cleared.

(45) Following the submission of the thesis, the GRS will provide the examiners with access to the thesis together with accompanying guidelines for examination for the relevant degree.

Part H - Final Submission After Examination

(46) The result of any thesis examination will be determined according to the Graduate Research Examinations Policy.

(47) Following any required amendments or revisions, the candidate is required to submit a final version of their thesis with an Access to Thesis - Consent form to the GRS.

(48) All graduate research theses for which a degree is awarded at La Trobe University will be deposited in electronic form with the University Library after successful examination.

Part I - La Trobe University's Institutional Repository - Access to Theses and Embargos

Access to Theses

(49) Following the Academic Board approval that the degree be awarded the thesis will be deposited with the La Trobe University's Institutional Repository.

(50) The thesis will normally be made available in the La Trobe University's Institutional Repository, where there are no restrictions on access to the thesis. All theses and documents in the Repository are normally indexed by web search engines and are freely accessible to any person.

Restrictions on Access - Embargo and Copyright

(51) Candidates or supervisors may have a range of reasons for applying for restriction of access to all or part of a thesis for a designated period. These reasons may include:

a. Pending publications or patents; or
b. Public interest; or
c. Copyright; or
d. Other commercial-in-confidence, or intellectual property considerations; or
e. Ethical sensitivities.

(52) Where any material in the thesis is subject to any copyright restrictions, or permissions, this information, and copies of any relevant agreements, will be included in the thesis according to the instructions outlined in the Graduate Research Examinations - Schedule B - Presentation of Theses for Graduate Research Degrees.

(53) If any of the circumstances outlined apply, or any other circumstances deemed valid, candidates or supervisors may apply for an embargo. When an embargo is applied to a thesis a digital copy of the thesis is kept in a dark archive and cannot be perused, loaned or copied until the end of the embargo period.

(54) If permission to use third party copyright material has not been granted, two versions of the thesis should be submitted - the original and a redacted version. The original version will be stored in a secure location with restricted access. The redacted version will be the version that is publicly exposed, subject to any other embargo that may have been imposed on the remaining material.

(55) Where a redacted version of the thesis has been submitted, citations for any omitted papers should be placed in the thesis where they would otherwise form a chapter or part of the thesis.

(56) If pending publications or patents, public interest, copyright, commercial-in-confidence agreements, intellectual property considerations or ethical sensitivities apply, the original complete version of such a thesis can be made available on request to a single individual as long as the Library Officer is satisfied that the request is for the purposes of research and study as outlined under Section 51 of the Copyright Act. However, if an embargo is in place access to either version would be denied.

Approvals

(57) A request for restricted access is made on the Access to Thesis - Consent Form before the final version of the thesis is submitted.

(58) Approval to restrict access to all or part of any thesis must be given by the Chair, BGR and is normally only given for a designated period, usually to two years.

(59) At the conclusion of any period of approved embargo, the thesis will revert to the open access repository unless a request to extend the period of restricted access has been approved by the Chair, BGR.

Changes in Permissions

(60) In exceptional circumstances, where permission to use copyrighted material has been given after submission of the final version of the thesis to the La Trobe University's Institutional Repository, a new version of the thesis with appropriate acknowledgements may be submitted to the La Trobe University's Institutional Repository for the purposes of publication in the open access repository.

Section 7 - Definitions

(61) Nil.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(62) This Procedure is made under the La Trobe University Act 2009.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th March 2024
Review Date	18th March 2027
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	19th March 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Manager - Policy	Rebecca Lubansky Senior Manager, Graduate and Global Research
Enquiries Contact	Graduate Research School

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