

Examination of Higher Doctorates Procedure

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) A higher doctorate degree is the highest qualification of the University and may be awarded by the Academic Board for work internationally recognised as a distinguished original contribution or contributions to knowledge in one or more branches of learning.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This document describes the procedures for the admission, examination and award of a higher doctorate.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(3) Refer to the [Graduate Research Examinations Policy](#).

Section 4 - Procedure

(4) While applicants are formally admitted to and enrolled in the degree there are no course or candidature requirements other than the submission of the work for examination.

Degrees Awarded

(5) The higher doctorate degree awarded to successful candidates will be included in the list of awards linked to the Schedule of La Trobe University Qualification Categories. The specific degree awarded will depend on the discipline of the research.

Eligibility for Admission

(6) In order to be eligible for admission to this degree applicants must normally:

- a. be a graduate of La Trobe University, or
- b. have been a salaried member of the academic staff of the University for a period of at least five years.

Criteria for the Award

(7) A higher doctorate will be awarded for work that is internationally recognised as an original contribution to knowledge.

(8) A body of work judged by examiners to have met the criteria for the award of a higher doctorate will have generated important debate, caused a change in theory or practice in the discipline, have influenced scholars or practitioners in the field, or have made a substantial impact on society.

Overseeing Committee

(9) The Higher Doctorates Committee (HDC) is a sub-committee of the Research and Graduate Studies Committee (RGSC).

(10) The HDC will be chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The membership and operations of the HDC will be as outlined in the Terms of Reference and this procedure.

(11) The HDC is responsible for the following functions:

- a. review of applications and recommendations to the Chair RGSC for admission to the degree
- b. appointment of examiners
- c. recommendations to the Chair of the RGSC in relation to the outcome of a higher doctorate examination.

Applications or nominations for higher doctorates

Applications

(12) Applicants for a higher doctorate degree at La Trobe University must submit the following to the Chair of the HDC in support of their application:

- a. a La Trobe Higher Doctorate Application Form
- b. a detailed curriculum vitae and evidence of their eligibility for admission to the degree (see Section 2) including copies of relevant testamurs
- c. a summary of their broad field of research
- d. a description of their achievements, including the applicant's view of the extent to which the work contributes to the advancement of knowledge
- e. an overview of the material to be submitted for the degree.

Nominations

(13) The following officers of the University may, where they consider it appropriate, recommend to the HDC admission to the degree without application to a person who satisfies the provisions of eligibility, and who has completed work considered by the nominators to be an original distinguished contribution or contributions to knowledge in one or more branches of learning:

- a. University Council members
- b. The Vice-Chancellor
- c. Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors

(14) Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) is also Chair of the RGSC, and submits a nomination for the degree, the recommendation from the HDC will be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor for approval.

(15) Nominees who accept such nomination will complete an application form for enrolment purposes but will not be required to submit the accompanying proposal material.

Admission to the degree

(16) Upon receipt of an application for a higher doctorate degree the HDC will determine whether in its opinion the work appears worthy of examination for the degree and if so shall formally recommend admission to the Chair RGSC.

(17) Applicants or nominees who have been approved for admission by the Chair RGSC or Vice-Chancellor will receive

a letter of offer to the degree from the Graduate Research School (GRS). The letter of offer will include:

- a. for nominees, an invitation to accept the nomination and complete the Application Form
- b. the date for submission of the work for examination, which will be no later than six months from the letter of offer
- c. the requirements for submission, as outlined in clauses 24 to 27, which will include an examination fee of \$1500 for applicants (this fee is waived for nominated candidates).

(18) Applicants or nominees who have not been approved for admission will be advised formally in writing that they may reapply after two years of the date of the letter if they have additional published outputs.

Confirmation of submission

(19) One month prior to the anticipated submission of the work for examination the candidate will write to the GRS confirming the date of submission.

(20) The examination fee should be paid at this time.

(21) Following the payment of the examination fee the candidate will be asked to supply the names of any examiners whom they do not wish to examine their submission.

(22) The GRS will provide instructions to the candidate concerning the uploading of digital material (including durable records of artefacts) and the provision of any hard copies for examination.

(23) The GRS will send an Appointment of Examiners Form to the Chair of the HDC seeking the nomination of examiners.

Appointment of examiners

(24) The HDC will appoint three examiners for the examination of a higher doctorate degree.

(25) Any examiners shall:

- a. be professors of international standing, and shall be persons considered by the HDC to have special knowledge and competence in the branch of learning relevant to the degree;
- b. be independent of La Trobe University; and
- c. have had no involvement with the candidate, either through co-publication, co-grant authorship, or being currently employed within the same department of the candidate's university.

(26) The HDC will take into account any examiners whom the candidate has requested not examine the thesis.

(27) The GRS will send a formal letter of invitation to the examiners.

Submission for examination

(28) A submission for a higher doctorate degree will normally consist of:

- a. a summary of the published work being submitted, in chronological and/or thematic groupings where appropriate;
- b. where the work includes any jointly authored publications, an outline of the candidate's contribution to the research and the published work;
- c. a statement confirming that the submission contains no work for which a degree has been awarded by La Trobe or any other university;

d. the published work and any appropriate framing material.

(29) Following confirmation of the availability of the examiners and any special requirements they may have, the GRS will provide the examiners with access to the submission together with guidelines for examination for the degree.

(30) Where any book(s) form part of the work to be submitted the applicant should provide three hard copies of each for examination.

Examination

(31) Examiners are required to submit independent reports within three months of receipt of the material and should not consult other examiners other than in exceptional circumstances, either following the approval of or at the request of the Chair of the HDC.

(32) During the examination process, there should not be any direct contact between an examiner and the candidate.

(33) Examiners will be asked to recommend either that:

- a. the degree be awarded to the candidate
- b. the degree should not be awarded to the candidate.

(34) The HDC may set aside an examination report when:

- a. there is sufficient evidence of inadequate or poor quality in that examination
- b. there is demonstrable bias that disadvantages the candidate and brings the examination into question
- c. it has been found that the examiner does not meet the criteria for examiners as prescribed by this procedure
- d. there is evidence of actions, such as collaboration between examiners or inappropriate communication with the candidate, that may bring the examination into disrepute.

Outcome of examination

(35) When the HDC has concluded its consideration of the examiners' reports it shall either recommend to the Chair of the RGSC that

- a. the degree be awarded to the candidate
- b. the degree should not be awarded to the candidate

(36) Where the recommendation of the HDC is that the degree should be awarded, and the recommendation is endorsed by the Chair RGSC, the Chair RGSC will submit the recommendation to the next meeting of the Academic Board for approval.

(37) After ratification by Academic Board, or an unsuccessful examination outcome is reached, each report with the examiner's name (unless the examiner has specifically requested his or her name be withheld) is normally made available to the candidate.

(38) Candidates who have been advised of an unsuccessful examination outcome will be advised formally in writing that they may reapply after two years of the date of the letter of outcome, if they have additional published outputs.

Request for review

(39) Candidates who have received an unsuccessful outcome will be advised of their right for a review.

(40) Reviews may only be sought on procedural grounds related to the conduct of the examination and must be

submitted to the University Ombudsman within 30 days of the date of the written advice of the examination outcome.

(41) If the review is upheld the Chair HDC will arrange for a re-examination of the work and appoint new examiners where appropriate.

Graduation and submission of archival version

(42) Following Academic Board approval, the Graduations Office will invite the candidate to graduate. The University Events Office will make appropriate additional arrangements for a graduation ceremony in which a higher doctorate will be awarded.

(43) The work for which the degree was awarded will normally be made publicly available in the University Online Repository where there are no restrictions on access to the work.

(44) The candidate will be asked to:

- a. complete an Access to Thesis - Consent form, provide copies of any relevant copyright agreements or restrictions on public access to the work, and indicate any need for embargo for all or part of the work;
- b. where any books form part of the submission, supply an additional hard copy for inclusion in the University Library Collection and a publisher's digital version, where these exist, for inclusion in the University Online Repository;
- c. supply a citation to be read at the graduation or public award of the degree.

Section 5 - Definitions

(45) For the purpose of this Procedure:

- a. Higher doctorate – An additional kind of Doctoral Degree, of higher standing than a PhD or professional doctorate, which is awarded on the basis of an internationally recognised original contribution to knowledge rather than through the process of supervised independent study.

Status and Details

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