1. Scope

Research Higher Degree studies culminate in the submission of a thesis. As per the Graduate Research Good Practice Principles, the thesis is defined as a substantial and intellectually coherent product or product(s) using one or more media such as a thesis, dissertation and artefacts, or exegesis and portfolio of creative works and/or performance. The submission may include previously published work but shall not include work submitted for another degree at Torrens University Australia (the University) or another tertiary institution in any country.

At Torrens University Australia, the thesis may be presented in the following formats, depending on the field of study:

- thesis as standard narrative
- thesis by publication
- major creative work.

2. Thesis presentation: Standard Narrative

A standard narrative thesis comprises a written work presented in typescript and divided into chapters (with appendices where relevant), with a sustained argument developed across the whole.

An electronic version (in pdf or Word) of the thesis must be submitted for examination to the Research Office. Students may be requested to also submit hard copies for examination if requested by appointed examiners.

The thesis must be submitted in the format described below.

2.1 Word length

The University requires a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) student to submit a thesis of 30,000-40,000 words, which demonstrates original and critical thought, and is clearly and coherently written. A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student is required to submit a thesis of 70,000-80,000 words, which demonstrates original and critical thought, is clearly and coherently written, and makes a contribution to knowledge in the area of research. Theses should not exceed the maximum length prescribed here. Thesis word limits include footnotes and any text associated with diagrams or tables in the body of the thesis. Appendices and bibliographies are not included in the word limit.
2.2 Languages other than English

All theses must be written in English unless the Higher Degree Research (HDR) Committee has approved a written application for a thesis to be presented in another language on academic grounds.

2.3 Printing and formatting

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2.3.2 Printing

Theses should be printed on good quality clean white A4 paper (297mm x 210mm) with a high quality laser printer or equivalent. Printing on both sides of the paper is permitted as long as it does not interfere with the readability of the thesis.

2.4 Editing

The thesis should be as free of typographical and spelling errors as possible. External proofreaders can be used to assist with formatting, grammar and style, but they must not alter the substantive content or conceptual organisation of the theses. The principal supervisor must approve the use of an editor before a professional editor is engaged. The ‘Guidelines for editing research theses’, developed by the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) in consultation with the Australian Council of Graduate Research Inc (ACGR), should be used.

2.5 Hard copy binding for examination

Soft binding with card or plastic covers is usually acceptable for the two hard copies submitted for examination purposes. This allows for any corrections or amendments required by the examiners to be made before hard cover binding. The binding must be strong enough to avoid damage through normal handling or the mailing process. Staples and ring-binder folders are not acceptable.

2.6 Lodgement with the library

After any corrections or amendments requested by the HDR Committee are made, a single soft copy version of your thesis must be lodged with the Torrens University Australia Library.
Lodgement of the thesis with the library is a condition of graduation. It is common practice to provide the principal supervisor with an additional hard cover bound copy of the thesis.

All necessary permissions under the Copyright Act 1968 must be obtained before lodgement. For example, any diagrams, illustrations, maps, tables or images that were created by others will require written permission from the copyright owners to be included in the thesis. The permission required is specifically for use of the copyright material in the electronic version of your thesis, which will be available online. The process of obtaining these permissions should commence well before submission of the thesis for examination. If written permission for any copyright items cannot be obtained, library staff should be informed so these elements can be removed from the electronic version of the thesis.

2.7 Title page

Theses must include a title page that sets out the following:
- full name of the student
- thesis title.
- the degree for which the thesis is submitted (e.g. “A thesis to meet the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy at Torrens University Australia”)
- the date of submission (month and year)

2.8 Declaration of originality

Theses must include a preliminary page with a signed and dated declaration of originality. An example declaration is as follows:

This thesis is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, and no materials which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Torrens University Australia or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. I acknowledge that copyright of published work contained within this thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

This sample statement should be modified if there are any qualifications or limitations to the declaration of originality.

2.9 Authority of access statement

Theses must include a preliminary page with a signed and dated authority of access statement. An example statement is as follows:

I authorise Torrens University Australia, and any library with which it has a formal agreement, the right to archive and to make available through the Library hardbound and digital copies of my thesis, in whole or in part, for loan or copying or communication, in all forms of media, whether currently or later known, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I retain the right to use all or part of this thesis in future works.

This sample statement should be modified if there are any qualifications or conditions on access due to confidentiality or other factors.
2.10 Ethical conduct statement

Theses must include a preliminary page with a signed and dated ethical conduct statement. An example statement is as follows:

The research associated with this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2.11 Abstract

Theses must include an abstract of no more than 350 words.

2.12 Table of contents and other lists

Theses should include a table of contents. If there are tables or figures in the thesis, a separate list of these should be included. In some cases, it will be appropriate to include an explanation of abbreviations, acronyms or symbols, and a glossary of key terms. A list of any publications or presentations arising from the research undertaken for the thesis should also be provided.

2.13 Acknowledgements

Theses may include an acknowledgements page to thank or acknowledge supervisors, colleagues, friends or family. This is an optional inclusion.

2.14 Body of the thesis

The body of the thesis, divided into chapters, is placed following the preliminary pages described above and the end pages described below.

2.15 Bibliography

A bibliography including all sources, presented in accordance with accepted disciplinary referencing standards (eg: APA, Vancouver, Harvard etc), must be included.

2.16 Appendices

If the thesis includes any appendices, they should be included following the bibliography.
3. Thesis Presentation: Thesis by Publication

A thesis by publication is partly comprised of material that has either been published, accepted for publication, submitted for publication or prepared in manuscript style ready to be submitted for publication. A thesis by publication must still meet the requirements of the PhD or MPhil. It must form a coherent whole, in a thematic and structural sense, including the embodiment of a sustained argument. The papers included must be linked to form an overall research narrative.

A thesis by publication would normally include a literature review, preliminary material contextualising the papers within the relevant field of knowledge, and a summary or conclusion, as well as the manuscripts. Each manuscript would usually be included as a separate chapter. The manuscripts need not be reformatted for inclusion in the thesis, but it will often be necessary to include some linking commentary between the manuscripts to ensure the thesis flows as a cohesive whole. It may also be necessary to provide supplementary information on methodology where this has been summarised for the purposes of the publications.

The papers included in a thesis by publication will normally have been published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals, books or conference proceedings, although it is permissible to include papers that have not yet been accepted if they make an appropriate contribution to the thesis as a whole. All the included papers must derive from work undertaken during the period of higher degree candidature. Papers published prior to the period of higher degree candidature cannot be included. Each paper must be accompanied by details of its status (published, accepted for publication, submitted for publication, not yet submitted).

3.1 Authorship

The papers included in a thesis by publication will normally be sole-authored by the HDR candidate. Co-authored papers may be included as long as they are accompanied by a statement of authorship outlining the candidate’s contribution and confirming the permission of any co-authors for inclusion in the thesis. The HDR candidate must have made a contribution of at least 50% to each of the papers.

A Statement of Authorship declaration for each paper included in the thesis should also be submitted with the thesis.

3.2 Number of papers

The number of papers required for a thesis by publication will vary, taking into account the thesis word limit and the contribution each paper makes to the thesis as a whole. As a minimum across all disciplines, the papers forming part of the thesis must include at least one published paper and at least three additional papers that have been submitted for publication. In some disciplines (especially the sciences), this minimum may suffice. In other disciplines (such as the humanities), additional papers may be necessary. The appropriate number of papers may reflect factors such as the content and length of the papers, the candidate’s contribution to authorship, whether the papers have been published or not, the quality of the journals concerned, and the impact of the papers. Supervisors and the University Research Committee are able to provide more guidance on this issue.

3.3 Presentation

A thesis by publication should be presented in accordance with the guidelines above for a standard narrative thesis, and include a bibliography as per the relevant referencing standards. The papers and
supplementary material will form the body of the thesis under 2.14. Under 2.3, some flexibility in relation to formatting will be permitted for papers that have been prepared in line with submission guidelines for particular journals.

Candidates intending to submit a thesis by publication are encouraged to consult with their supervisors and the Research Office about their plans at an early stage of their candidature to ensure they have a good understanding of what is required.

4. Thesis Presentation: Major Creative Work

A thesis by major creative work comprises a presentation in the form of a design, model, exhibition, musical or literary composition, performance, film, software or multimedia presentation together with an exegesis of up to 12,000 words for the MPhil or 20,000 words for the PhD. The submission must demonstrate advanced creative, conceptual and analytical skills in keeping with the level of the higher degree.

The requirements for submission of a major creative work vary between disciplines and candidates should discuss appropriate presentation formats with their supervisors. Written components, including the exegesis that must accompany all creative works, should be presented in accordance with the guidelines above for a standard narrative thesis (though the word limits specified at 2.1 will not apply).

The creative work itself, when not in written format, should be presented in such a way that access by University Research Committee and Higher Degree by Research Committee members and examiners is facilitated. This may require multiple copies of the work to be provided. Where this is not feasible, such as in the case of live performances, physical models or artworks, candidates should consult with their supervisors and the Research Office to identify the best means of facilitating access to the work. Where possible, the creative work should also be presented in a form that facilitates lodgment in the Torrens University Australia Library.

The written exegesis is a vital element of the thesis by major creative work. It should describe the form of the creative work, provide a commentary on the work, and place it within the broader context of the discipline area. This is an opportunity for candidates to outline the significance of their creative work and the contribution it makes to the relevant field, which is particularly important at PhD level.

5. Preparing for submission and examination

Candidates intending to submit a thesis by major creative work are encouraged to consult with their supervisors and the Research Office about their plans at an early stage of their candidature to ensure they have a good understanding of what is required.

Students must complete a Pre-submission Report, and a Notification of Intention to Submit at the relevant times, according to the Research Student Progress Procedure. The student must submit all forms through the Blackboard Classroom.

The principal supervisor is required to certify that the thesis is ready for submission. This includes confirming that:

- the thesis is presented in an acceptable form for examination.
- the thesis is within the prescribed word limit (an estimation of the overall word length will suffice).
- data and primary research materials related to the preparation of the thesis have been managed and stored in accordance with the Research Data Management Policy.
The principal supervisor is primarily responsible for identifying and nominating four potential examiners. Information about the employment and research experience of the potential examiners, such as a CV, must be provided. Students have the right to identify people they do not wish to act as examiners.

HDR examiners must have international standing in the discipline and be academically reputable in the field of the thesis. They must be independent of the conduct of the research and have no real or perceived conflict of interest in reaching their decision. An MPhil requires two examiners, at least one of whom must be external to the University. A PhD requires two examiners, both of whom are external to the University. For the examination of a PhD thesis, at least one of the nominated examiners should be from outside Australia. The PhD also requires a reserve examiner.

6. Appointing Examiners

The Research Director, taking advice from the HDR Committee as required, is responsible for appointing examiners from the nominations provided by the principal supervisor, taking into account any potential examiners the student does not wish to be appointed, but is not bound by these preferences. The names of the examiners appointed are not released to students until the examination process is complete, with the examiners’ permission.

7. The Examination Process

The Research Office will endeavour to confirm the appointment of examiners in advance of submission of the thesis so that the examination process can proceed smoothly. Examiners are asked to provide their reports within eight weeks of receiving the thesis. However, examiners have many other demands on their time and it is not always possible to avoid delays. The Research Office will make every effort to keep students informed of the progress of their examination process, but it can be expected to take several months at a minimum.

The examiner’s role is to:

- ensure the thesis is of an acceptable quality for award of the degree.
- benchmark the thesis against standards that apply at other universities.
- assure that the thesis complies with appropriate research protocols in the relevant field of study.
- certify, as far as is reasonable, that the thesis comprises original work.
- provide an expert written report and recommended outcome for the thesis.
- suggest corrections and changes before finalisation of the thesis.

The Research Office reviews the examiners’ reports once received, prior to submitting these for consideration by the HDR Committee. The primary supervisor will have the right of reply for all examination reports and is invited to offer additional feedback for the HDR Committee to consider. At the discretion of the primary supervisor, examiner reports may be shared in confidence with co-supervisors. If the examination reports are not favourable, the principal supervisor will be given the opportunity to correspond or meet with the HDR Committee to defend the thesis. The student is not involved in any correspondence in relation to the examination while the thesis is under examination.

The HDR Committee, rather than the examiners, makes a recommendation of whether the thesis merits the award of the degree. In making its determination, the Committee relies chiefly on the examiners’ reports and supervisors’ feedback, but advice may be sought from external sources. A third, external, examiner may be appointed to undertake a further independent examination of the thesis. In exceptional circumstances, the HDR Committee may appoint an external arbitrator to review the examiners’ reports and adjudicate.
The HDR Committee recommends one of four outcomes for the thesis:

- that it be accepted for the award of the degree unconditionally
- that it be accepted for the award of the degree subject to amendments specified in the examiners’ reports
- that it not be accepted for the award of the degree, but the student invited to resubmit the thesis in a revised form, or
- that it not be accepted for the award of the degree.

The student is advised of the recommended outcome after the HDR Committee has made its deliberation.

8. Notification of Outcome and Resubmission

The Research Office will convey the HDR Committee’s recommendation to the candidate and primary supervisor, along with both examiner reports.

Students whose theses are accepted unconditionally for the award of the degree are not required to make any changes and the final thesis will be lodged with the Research Office and the library. The Research Office informs the Research Committee of the recommendation to award the degree. The Research Committee approves the recommendation and seeks final ratification from the Academic Board. Admission into the degree is not confirmed until the Academic Board has approved the award.

Students whose theses are accepted for the award of the degree subject to amendments will be provided with guidance on the nature of the amendments required. Students will be asked to make the required changes before lodging their revised thesis, with a table of all changes made, to the Research Office. Following the submission of responses and the revised thesis by the candidate, the primary supervisor must advise the Research Office whether they are satisfied with the changes. Once the revised thesis has been approved by the HDR Committee, the final thesis will be lodged with the Research Office and the library. The Research Office informs the Research Committee of the recommendation to award the degree. The Research Committee approves the recommendation and seeks final ratification from the Academic Board. Admission into the degree is not confirmed until the Academic Board has approved the award.

Students whose theses are not accepted for award of the degree but who are invited to resubmit following revisions will be provided with guidance on the revisions required. These students will be granted a 6-month extension of candidature (12 months for part-time students) to complete these revisions and resubmit their revised theses for examination. The granting of the extension of candidature is at the discretion of the HDR Committee. Students who have already been granted an extension prior to submission may not be eligible for another full 6-month (12 months for part-time students) period.

No further extensions beyond the period granted by the HDR Committee for revision and resubmission are possible. Students whose resubmitted theses are not accepted for the award of the degree will not have any further opportunities for resubmission.

In the case of a PhD thesis not being accepted for the award of the PhD, the HDR Committee may determine that the thesis can be accepted for the award of the degree of MPhil instead. This requires the consent of the student and may involve such conditions as stipulated by the HDR Committee.

Where the examination process results in a "Non-Award" outcome, the candidate has the right to lodge an appeal with the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic). The student may only appeal the decision on grounds of procedural fairness.
Fee liability upon submission of a thesis for examination:

- If a domestic student submits their thesis for examination on or before the census date, they will not be liable for tuition fees for that study period. If the student submits their thesis after the census date, the student will be liable for the tuition fees for that study period.

- If an international student submits their thesis for examination 28 calendar days or more before the start of a study period, they will not be liable for the fees. If the student submits their thesis less than 28 calendar days before the study period commences, they will be liable for the tuition fees for the upcoming study period.

9. Graduation

Students who have had their theses accepted for the award of a degree, lodged their theses with the Research Office and the library, and discharged any other outstanding obligations to the University (such as payment of fees and charges) will be eligible for graduation. Campus Life (Student Services) will advise students of upcoming graduation ceremonies at which degrees may be conferred. Students may also apply to Campus Life (Student Services) to have their degrees conferred in absentia if they do not wish to attend a graduation ceremony.