

Higher Doctoral Degrees Policy

Section 1 - Scope

- (1) This Policy shall apply to degrees classified as Higher Doctoral Degrees of the University.
- (2) This Policy shall not apply to degrees conferred honoris causal, Doctoral or Masters by Research Degrees, Professional Doctorates or to degrees classified as Master degrees by coursework.
- (3) This Policy is subject to any provisions in the relevant degree schedules.

Section 2 - Admission to Candidature

- (4) An applicant for admission to candidature for a degree shall satisfy the requirements of the University governing admission and enrolment, and any other additional requirements prescribed in the relevant Schedule. English proficiency requirements must be met.
- (5) A copy of this Policy and any other guidelines which may be approved from time to time shall be provided to the applicant at the time of offer of a place in a program.

Section 3 - Termination of Candidature

- (6) The candidature may be terminated by the Dean of Graduate Research on the recommendation of the Research Training Sub-Committee, a sub-committee of the Research Committee, (hereafter referred to as 'the Committee') in any of the following circumstances:
 - a. where the candidate has failed to lodge a submission within prescribed time limits, including extensions as approved by the Dean of Graduate Research;
 - b. where the candidate has failed to otherwise comply with this Policy.
- (7) Where a recommendation that candidature be terminated is accepted by the Dean of Graduate Research, the candidate shall be notified in writing.

Section 4 - Appeal Procedure - Termination of Candidature

- (8) A candidate whose candidature has been terminated by the Dean of Graduate Research may appeal against the decision in writing, within 20 working days of the date of the letter of notification of termination of candidature. Appeals will be permitted on procedural grounds only. In accordance with Universities Australia Policy, appeals by candidates simply rejecting an assessment of the merit of their work will not be permitted nor will an appeal on the grounds of complaint about arrangements during the period of candidature. In these latter cases, the grievance procedures should be used as appropriate (refer to Sections 5 and 13).

(9) Upon receipt of an appeal, the Dean of Graduate Research shall pass the appeal to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) who shall determine if a case exists for reconsideration of the candidate's termination of enrolment. If it is determined that a case does exist, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) will advise the Head of School and Dean of Graduate Research to allow the candidate to resume candidature under whatsoever conditions the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) determines.

(10) If the candidate was unable to make representation due to exceptional circumstances, the candidate may appeal for reconsideration of the decision within 20 working days of advising the Dean of Graduate Research of the nature of the exceptional circumstances.

(11) In exceptional circumstances a former candidate whose enrolment was previously terminated may be re-admitted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) on the recommendation of the relevant Head of School, Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) and Dean of Graduate Research, after a period of time as determined by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) may prescribe whatsoever terms and conditions on the candidate's re-enrolment.

Section 5 - Grievance Procedures

(12) A candidate who has a complaint or grievance regarding matters affecting candidature (other than in relation to classification of submissions or termination) shall normally report, in the first instance, to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee). If the matter remains unresolved, the candidate may approach the Dean of Graduate Research, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), or the University's Complaints Officer.

(13) Notwithstanding the above, all complaints and grievances will be considered in accordance with the University [Complaint and Grievance Policy](#).

Section 6 - Withdrawal

(14) A candidate may withdraw from the program up until the date that the submission is lodged, only by informing Graduate Research in writing and the withdrawal shall take effect from the date of receipt of such notification. Withdrawal is not permitted once the submission has been lodged.

Section 7 - Duration of Candidature

(15) The program shall be completed and the submission lodged for examination in the timeframe outlined in the relevant Schedule.

(16) A candidate may lodge an application for an extension of time to the Dean of Graduate Research.

Section 8 - Submission

(17) A submission lodged for a degree shall meet the requirements of the degree as prescribed in the relevant Schedule.

(18) A submission:

- a. where the candidate has failed to lodge a submission within prescribed time limits, including extensions as approved by the Dean of Graduate Research;
- b. shall normally be written in English;

- c. shall be typed, bound or presented in the manner prescribed by the Committee; and
- d. shall also be lodged electronically.

(19) The candidate must include a signed statement indicating:

- a. indicating any material that has been submitted for another award; and
- b. that the candidate is the sole author of a substantial part of the material, and
- c. in the case of joint authorship the extent of the candidate's own contribution.

Section 9 - Lodgement of Submission for Examination

(20) The candidate shall lodge with Graduate Research copies of the higher doctorate submission in the format prescribed in the Higher Degree by Research [Thesis Preparation and Submission Guidelines](#).

(21) It is a requirement that an electronic copy of the submission is lodged with the University's institutional digital repository.

Section 10 - Examination of Submission

(22) The Pro Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) shall appoint the number of examiners as prescribed in the relevant Schedule.

(23) The names of examiners shall not be disclosed to the candidate prior to the lodgement of the submission, nor released after the examination process is completed unless the examiner(s) specifically approves the release of his/her identity, subject to the provisions of the [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#) (GIPA Act). Only the Dean of Graduate Research (or nominee) may communicate with the examiners regarding the examination process while the submission is under examination. Breaches of this provision in relation to communication with examiners will be referred to the Committee and may be interpreted as misconduct within the terms of University policy.

(24) Each examiner shall provide an independent, written report on the merits of the submission which shall contain an assessment of the submission in relation to the stated submission objectives and as a requirement for a higher doctoral degree. The report shall include one of the following recommendations:

- a. the submission be classified as passed; or
- b. the submission be classified as failed.

(25) The Committee shall consider the reports of examiners, and any other recommendations prescribed in the relevant Schedule and shall:

- a. recommend to the Dean of Graduate Research that the candidate be admitted to the degree subject to any condition that the Committee may impose and lodgement of the electronic copy; or
- b. recommend to the Dean of Graduate Research that the candidate not be admitted to the degree, and that the candidature be terminated.

(26) Where the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, before making any recommendation, the Committee may take one or more of the following actions, namely:

- a. appoint the additional examiner;

- b. appoint an arbiter;
- c. invite the examiners to confer with each other and/or with the Committee, with a view to the presentation of a consolidated recommendation.

(27) There shall be no provision for a candidate to revise and resubmit the submission for further examination.

Section 11 - Defence of Submission

(28) Before recommending to the Dean of Graduate Research that the degree not be awarded, the Committee may invite the candidate to provide an academic defence of the submission, in oral and/or written form, in response to the reports of the examiner(s).

Section 12 - Appeals Procedure - Examination of Submission

(29) A candidate may lodge an appeal against the outcome of the examination of the submission on the basis of process, but not against evaluations in the assessment of the Examiners' Reports, nor against the Committee's recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research.

Section 13 - Appeals Against Classification of Submissions as Failed

(30) A candidate whose submission has been classified as failed may, within 28 days of the date of the letter of notification of the failed classification, appeal in writing against this classification to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation). Appeals will be permitted on the following grounds only:

- a. procedural irregularities in the examination of the submission or in the conduct of any examination which forms part of the determination of the result. In this case it is necessary for the candidate to demonstrate that an aspect(s) of the examination process, as determined in these Rules, was not appropriately followed and that this caused, or was likely to have substantially contributed to, the award of a fail grade; or
- b. documented evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the Examiners.

(31) Upon receipt of an appeal, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) shall review all relevant information to determine if a case exists for reconsideration of the fail classification of the candidate's submission. In such cases, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) may resolve that:

- a. the candidate be permitted to re-lodge the submission for examination by a new examiner or examiners; or
- b. the submission be confirmed as failed.

(32) The new examiner(s) shall examine the submission and provide a written recommendation to the Committee under the same provisions as the original examiners as prescribed in these Rules.

Section 14 - Award of the Degree and Availability of

Submission

(33) To qualify for admission to the degree a candidate shall enrol and satisfy the requirements prescribed in the relevant degree Schedule.

(34) A candidate awarded the degree is required to lodge an electronic copy of the submission within one month of official notification of the examination outcome.

(35) The copies of the submission lodged by the candidate shall become the property of the University. The copies are subject to any confidentiality agreements entered into by the University, the candidate and any sponsoring body of the research.

(36) When an award outcome is determined by the Committee, the Dean of Graduate Research makes a recommendation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), President of Academic Senate and the Vice-Chancellor that the degree be awarded. A higher doctoral candidate is deemed to have qualified for the award of the degree on the date the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), President of Academic Senate and the Vice-Chancellor approve admission to the degree under delegated authority from Council.

(37) The copy of the submission deposited in the University Library shall be available immediately to any person for consultation or copying unless the candidate makes an application to the Dean of Graduate Research. The Dean of Graduate Research may determine that the submission will not be made available without the written consent of the author for a specified period.

(38) Subject to any determination under Clause 37, the Library may supply in any medium, a copy of the submission upon request to any person or library.

Section 15 - Relaxing Provision

(39) In exceptional circumstances arising in a particular case, the Academic Senate, on the recommendation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), may relax any provision of this Policy.

Section 16 - Effects of Changes in the Policy

(40) A candidate shall comply with this Policy which may be from time to time amended or remade by the Academic Senate. Candidates may apply by exception to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) to be examined under the Policy or Schedules in force at any time during the period of candidature. Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) is of the opinion that any candidate has been or may be adversely affected by a change in the Policy since initial enrolment, the candidate may be permitted to continue under such Policy or Schedule in force at any time during the period of candidature and on conditions the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) may prescribe.

Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Applicant" - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Candidature" - The period of time between acceptance of offer and termination, withdrawal from, or completion of a higher degree by research program, including periods when a candidate is not enrolled.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"Working day" - Any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday in Newcastle, on which business may be conducted.

"Complaint" - As defined in Australian/New Zealand Standard - Guidelines for complaint management in organisations.

"Term" - When referring to an academic period, term means a period of time aligned to an academic year for the delivery of a course in which students enrol and for which they are usually charged fees for example semesters, trimesters, summer, winter or full-year term. The academic year for a term is determined by the academic year in which the course commences, not concludes. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Award" - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Academic Senate" - The Academic Senate of the University as described in the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Council" - The governing authority of the University established under section 8A of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.