

Coursework Thesis Enrolment, Supervision and Examination

Policy Title	Coursework Thesis Supervision Policy
Review Date	August 2012

Purpose

This policy provides principles for the supervision of students undertaking the thesis components of coursework higher degrees and honours programs, an area that is not covered by the provisions for the supervision of students in research degrees.

Scope

This policy applies to all honours and postgraduate coursework theses.

Legislative Context

[Statute 11.1 – Entry Quotas and Admission](#)

[Regulation 11.1.R3 – Principles of Selection for Entry to Courses](#)

[Statute 11.3 – Enrolment for a Higher Degree](#)

[Statute 12.5 – Examination of Theses for Higher Degrees](#)

Definitions

coursework thesis: A thesis or research project completed by a student under the supervision of a member of the academic staff of the University as part of a coursework higher degree, an honours program or at the fourth year of an undergraduate program, which is weighted at 25 points or more.

department: The department, school or other academic organisational unit that is responsible for the program in which the student is enrolled.

thesis: The term 'thesis' is used throughout this policy to refer to theses and research projects.

POLICY

1 Policy Statement

1.1.1 This policy is intended to ensure the provision of appropriate supervision arrangements for students undertaking the thesis or research project components of honours programs and coursework higher degrees, including postgraduate diploma, coursework master and coursework doctorate programs, where the thesis is of 25 or more points in weight. For theses of less than 25 points, this policy may be considered as advice rather than as mandatory.

2 Principles for Acceptance of Candidature

- 2.1 A faculty that accepts a student into a course in which there is a thesis component must ensure:
- that it is able to appoint appropriate supervisors in a timely manner and provide adequate supervision for the student on a continuing basis
 - that it is able to provide appropriate resources to support the student
 - that a suitable thesis topic can be made available
 - that the thesis component can be examined appropriately.
- 2.2 Where a student from another university is placed at the University of Melbourne, the department must ensure that an appropriate contractual arrangement is agreed with the other university and the student, having regard to the principles outlined in this policy.

3 Principles for Examination of the Thesis

- 3.1 The principles governing the examination of coursework theses are as follows:
- 3.1.1 The assessment will reflect appropriate academic standards.
 - 3.1.2 Examiners will be given clear guidelines about assessment criteria and standards required for the various grades of assessment;
 - 3.1.3 The thesis will not usually be assessed solely by the thesis supervisor; where practicable, there should be at least two examiners (particularly for theses carrying credit point values of 50 points or more), and the process by which a final mark is produced from the examiners' ratings should be consistent within the program;
 - 3.1.4 There is a clear and transparent process for appointing examiners, the outcome of the assessment is not prejudiced by any conflict of interest (for example, concerning intellectual property or authorship) and examiners have sufficient expertise to complete an assessment of the thesis in terms of the stated assessment criteria;
 - 3.1.5 Benchmarking methods will be used from time to time to provide assurances about the quality of the assessment process.
 - 3.1.6 The assessment process will set out clear and transparent methods for resolving discrepancies among examiners. These are likely to include at least some of the following:
 - a The appointment of a Chair of Examiners with responsibility for allocation of examiners and resolution of discrepancies;
 - b A process for seeking an agreed assessment outcome through consultation among examiners;
 - c A process for appointing an additional examiner and for incorporating the additional examiner's input into the final thesis assessment (in particular, it should be clear: whether all assessments will be taken into account and, if so, how; whether a discrepant assessment will be discarded; and whether the determination of the additional examiner will be final).
 - 3.1.7 The assessment process will provide a mechanism by which the supervisor can signal concern over the fairness of the mark awarded to a thesis, and there should be a clear and transparent mechanism for resolving such concerns.
 - 3.1.8 The assessment process should yield timely outcomes, recognising the contribution of coursework thesis marks to students' options for employment and further study.

PROCEDURES

1 Acceptance of Candidature

- 1.1 Faculties offering postgraduate coursework programs containing thesis elements will determine rules governing the following matters:
- a. The number of supervisors to be appointed for the thesis
 - b. Processes for the submission of research proposals, the acceptance of candidature and the approval of the research topic
 - c. Deadlines for submission of progress reports and of the final thesis, and intermission of and extensions to thesis candidature

- d. The form of presentation of the completed thesis or report, including the number of copies, the form of binding and the nature of any oral presentation that is required
 - e. The process for examination, including the number of examiners and whether the examiners are internal or external or a combination of both.
- 1.2 Applicants for entry to postgraduate coursework programs must be advised of the above requirements no later than the point of enrolment in the program concerned.

2 Supervisors

- 2.1 The department responsible for administering the program is responsible for the timely appointment of supervisors. Supervisors should be appropriately qualified in terms of formal qualifications or experience and knowledge so as to be able to provide adequate guidance to the student.
- 2.3 It is the department's responsibility to ensure appropriate supervisory standards and continuity of supervision, including where the principal supervisor is from another department. Where the principal supervisor is not a member of the student's department, the program coordinator (or nominee) should act as a departmental supervisor.
- 2.4 Where a student is placed in an affiliated organisation for the purpose of undertaking the thesis or project, a member of staff of that organisation may supervise, but, if the person concerned is to be the principal or sole supervisor, they must be contracted to the University for the purposes of supervising the student in accordance with Human Resources policies and procedures.
- 2.5 A person from an external organisation that is not affiliated may be an associate supervisor but not the principal supervisor.
- 2.6 Supervisors should supervise the student throughout the period of candidature, but if a supervisor becomes unavailable, a replacement must be appointed as soon as practicable so that there is no loss of continuity in supervision.
- 2.7 Where the student's research is of an interdisciplinary nature, the faculty may appoint an additional supervisor from an appropriate discipline to co-supervise the student.

3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Department, Supervisor and Student

- 3.1 The department should advise its students no later than their commencement in the thesis subject on how the supervision process will proceed. Supervisors and students have the following roles and responsibilities:

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Student

- 3.2.1 In addition to the responsibilities of students generally, as provided under University policy, students enrolled in the research components of postgraduate coursework programs are responsible for:
- a Where the thesis topic is negotiable, negotiating the topic of the thesis with a prospective supervisor;
 - b Informing the program coordinator of the topic and supervisor selected;
 - c Preparing a research proposal, as required;
 - d Maintaining progress as documented in the research proposal;
 - e Negotiating alterations to the research proposal with the supervisor;
 - f Meeting regularly with the supervisor;
 - g Raising any issues or problems with the supervisor as soon as practicable;

- h Informing the program coordinator if a supervisor is not available or does not attend scheduled meetings;
- i Ensuring that the writing style and presentation of the thesis are appropriate; and
- j Submission of the thesis in the form required by the faculty.

3.3 *Roles and Responsibilities of the Supervisor*

- 3.3.1 Responsibilities of the supervisor include but are not limited to the following:
- a Determining a suitable research topic, or where the thesis topic is negotiable, negotiating a suitable research topic with the student and, where applicable, assisting the student to prepare the research proposal
 - b Completing the [Supervision Checklist](#) in consultation with the student
 - c Participating as required in student induction processes concerning policies and procedures relevant to the research topic and methodology, and assisting students with any queries on research policies and procedures.
 - d Discussing authorship (publications, abstracts) and any intellectual property issues prior to the start of the thesis
 - e Arranging to meet regularly with the student to discuss the design and conduct of the research, its outcomes and the preparation of the thesis or report and any oral presentations required;
 - f Guiding the student to appropriate reference material
 - g Providing advice and feedback on the conduct of the research, on any seminars and written submissions presented by the student and on drafts of the thesis or report prior to submission;
 - h Informing the program coordinator if the student fails to attend scheduled meetings without reason
 - i Checking drafts for writing style and presentation problems
 - j Where appropriate, encouraging the student to publish their research and advising on publication avenues.

3.4 *Roles and Responsibilities of the Department*

- 3.4.1 Responsibilities of the Department include but are not limited to the following:
- a Appointment of supervisors, chair of examiners and examiners;
 - b Provision of necessary resources to support the student in the candidature;
 - c Providing appropriate induction to students on all relevant policies and procedures governing the conduct of the research and the submission of the thesis, including policies on:
 - i research integrity,
 - ii research misconduct and plagiarism,
 - iii research ethics,
 - iv intellectual property; and
 - d Hearing any complaints concerning the candidature, within the terms of University policy and procedures on the handling of student complaints and grievances.

4 **Leave of absence**

- 4.1 Once a student is enrolled in a thesis subject, leave of absence from the course will not be granted unless the project can be resumed without prejudicing the integrity of the research and the completion of the thesis. All applications for leave of absence from the course must be supported by written approval from the supervisor and the program coordinator.

5 **Change to part-time status once the thesis is commenced**

- 5.1 Special conditions apply before a student is permitted to change from full-time to part-time status (see Section 6 *Withdrawal from the thesis* below). Any student who has commenced a thesis should obtain the approval of the relevant associate dean (or equivalent) before a change of status can be approved.

6 Withdrawal from the thesis subject

- 6.1 Withdrawal from the thesis component of the course will not normally be permitted. Students experiencing difficulties in the thesis subject(s) may apply for special consideration under the University's policy on Special Consideration, and the head of department may grant extensions of time for completion of the thesis within the provisions of faculty policy.
- 6.2 Where a student wishes to withdraw from a course, the granting of an extension for the completion of the thesis is the preferred course of action because the University cannot guarantee that a student who has withdrawn from the course will be readmitted to the course. If the student is readmitted, a new project would need to be negotiated. A student wishing to withdraw from the thesis while remaining enrolled in the course must apply to the head of department in writing, stating reasons and supplying medical or other evidence as appropriate.

7 Extensions of Time for Submission

- 7.1 A student seeking an extension of time for submission must apply under the Special Consideration process.

8 Examination of the Thesis

- 8.1 The thesis examination procedures will be documented and made available to students on enrolment in the thesis subject. For substantial theses of 100 points or more, it is recommended that examination procedures follow those set out for the examination of masters theses by research at <http://www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/current/masters/genericbk/examination.html>
- 8.2 The chair of examiners will appoint the examiner(s), in consultation with the program coordinator (if the program coordinator is not the chair of examiners) and the supervisor.
- 8.3 Each examiner is expected to provide the chair of examiners with a mark for the thesis and written comments. Written comments should be general in nature. Such comments should be clearly distinguished from suggestions about possible improvements to the text or possible additional work, which an examiner may or may not provide as a courtesy to the student.
- 8.4 Where more than one examiner is engaged, the chair of examiners will coordinate the process for arriving at a single mark and grade, including the departmental process for resolution of discrepancies where applicable.
- 8.5 An overall mark will be released. The Chair of Examiners will provide feedback on the thesis to the student based on information of a general nature included in the written examiners' comments. The Chair of Examiners must ensure that the anonymity of examiners is preserved.
- 8.6 Students will be advised of the University policy and procedures for appeal.

9 Complaints and Appeals

- 9.1 Students who wish to lodge a complaint or appeal must do so under the University's Complaint, Grievance & Appeals Resolution Procedures.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1 Policy Owner

1.1 The Academic Board is the policy owner.

VERSION CONTROL & CHANGE HISTORY

Version No	Approval Date	Approved By	Amendment
1	27 August 2009	Academic Board	—

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

[Supervision Checklist](#)

[Masters of Philosophy Handbook](#)

RELATED MATERIALS

[Student Expectations & Responsibilities Policy](#)

[Student Grievances & Appeals Policy](#)

POLICY LIBRARY REQUIREMENTS

Category	Academic
Key Words	thesis, honours, masters, supervision