



Guidelines for Creative Production Theses

(Doctor of Creative Arts, Master of Philosophy – Creative Arts)
Higher Degree by Research Students

These guidelines should be considered in conjunction with Rule 10: Degree of Doctor by Research and Rule 11: Degree of Master by Research. These documents are available on the Curtin Compliance, Legislation and Policy website at http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes_rules.cfm.

1.0 What is a creative production thesis

- 1.1 A creative production thesis is the product of a research program, and therefore meets Curtin University's requirements in that it forms a substantial original contribution to the knowledge or understanding of a field of study and demonstrates the ability to design and carry out independent research.
 - 1.2 A creative production thesis consists of two components — a production (such as a novella, a series of paintings, a film, etc.) and a discursive text (called the exegesis).
 - 1.3 The two elements of the thesis form two complementary outcomes of a singular research program where the two elements are related in that both address the same central research question through articulating, in differing modes or languages, ideas or meanings which “answer” that question.
 - 1.4 Thus the exegesis does not provide a direct commentary on the production, nor does the production simply illustrate the exegesis — rather both elements maintain the integrity of the specific discourse (or language) in which they are created, and “speak to” each other through their common purpose of elucidating a response to the research question. The exegesis, however, may refer to the production and/or contain commentary on the production as an appendix or a subsidiary portfolio. In some creative genres (such as creative non-fiction) the creative component and the exegesis may be integrated into a single piece of writing, in which they still “speak to” each other through their common purpose of elucidating a response to the research question.
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2.0 Who should consider preparing a creative production thesis

- 2.1 A creative production thesis is a significant option for those who work in fields where ideas are explored and meanings are made not only through expository writing but also through the media (or languages) of the visual arts, creative writing, film, television, design, jewellery, theatrical performance, curatorial studies, among others.
- 2.2 A creative production thesis is relevant to those whose research question is best investigated and articulated through more than one medium (or language).
- 2.3 A creative production thesis is appropriate for those who have an educational or professional background in the field of the proposed research, and who wish to signify to future employers that their research specialisation has been in creative practice.

3.0 Issues to consider carefully

- 3.1 Candidates should consider carefully how the production element of the thesis functions as a mode of research (see sections included *What is a creative production thesis* and *Further Reading*).
 - 3.2 Candidates should be committed to working in two modes (making and writing) - this may happen simultaneously or dialectically.
 - 3.3 Given that a creative production thesis requires functioning in at least two roles (maker and writer), and sometimes in three (maker, writer and performer/director/exhibiter), candidates should take care to devise a “doable” research project - setting clear limits on the project and planning carefully all its dimensions (making, writing and, in some cases, performing/exhibiting). Refer section on *Submission of a creative production thesis*.
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4.0 Submission of creative production theses

- 4.1 A creative production is examined as a whole (as a thesis comprised by both exegesis and creative production). Thus the two components should be submitted as a whole:
 - Where the production component of the thesis is in print format (e.g., a collection of poetry, a novella, a collection of professional writings, etc.), the thesis should be submitted for examination in a single bound document (incorporating photographic images, illustrations, etc.). Candidates should consult with their Thesis Committee where an exception seems warranted.
 - Where the production component of the thesis is in an electronic medium (e.g., filmic, televisual, web-based, etc.), the thesis should be submitted for examination in two formats - the exegesis in print format and the electronic production in CD/DVD format.
 - Where the production component of the thesis is a performance or exhibition, the thesis should be submitted for examination in two formats - the exegesis in print format and the creative production in “live” performance or exhibition. In these instances, candidates should ensure that the print exegesis is submitted to the Thesis Examinations office in time for it to be sent to examiners at least two weeks prior to any performance/exhibition (normally four weeks before any performance/exhibition).
- 4.2 As a creative-production thesis consists of two components (production and exegesis), the Abstract submitted with the thesis should address the thesis as a whole (i.e., both components) and should make clear to examiners what is the central research question of the thesis as a whole, and how the two components form two different but related answers to that question.
- 4.3 To meet these submission requirements, candidates should begin to imagine from the outset of their research program the final form of their submitted thesis, consulting with their Thesis Committee, and attending seminars, workshops, and performances/exhibitions that discuss and/or exemplify options.
- 4.4 Where the final form of the thesis entails the examination of a “live” performance or exhibition, candidates should familiarise themselves with available venues, ascertain and plan for associated expenses, and investigate any School or University level support. The selection of the venue for the presentation of a performance/exhibition should be appropriate to the creative production and made in consultation with the candidate’s Thesis Committee. Candidates need to be aware that venues require advanced bookings and plans should begin with the writing of the candidacy proposal and develop in parallel with the development of the exegesis and creative production.
 - Candidates whose thesis entails an exhibition may have the opportunity of exhibiting their final submission at the John Curtin Gallery in its annual HDR creative practice exhibition (this is not compulsory). If the John Curtin Gallery is appropriate and available as the exhibition site, forward planning should include early meetings between the candidate, the Thesis Committee and John Curtin Gallery staff. As candidates approach their final year of study, they should work closely with John Curtin Gallery staff to finalise specific details of their exhibition.

5.0 Examination of creative production theses

- 5.1 Examiners will receive the creative-production thesis as a whole (see section on *Submission of creative production theses*).
- 5.2 Examiners will be informed of Curtin's model for creative production theses (the Research Question model), and will be asked to comment on both elements of the thesis in sufficient detail, as well as on success of the two elements in terms of each being a response to the central research question.

Examiners will be asked, when making recommendations for any revisions to one or both parts of the thesis and, especially, in regard to the production component, to distinguish between what should be revised before final submission and what could be addressed through future work.

6.0 Permanent recording of creative production theses

- 6.1 The permanent record of creative-production theses should use technologies appropriate to the field of study. Such material must be presented in a stable and commonly accepted format. Candidates should discuss the options with their Thesis Committee and with the Faculty Librarian, so as to ensure archival quality.
- 6.2 From candidacy application forward, the candidate should consider carefully how they will prepare a permanent record of a performance/exhibition element of a creative production thesis, factoring this into the candidacy proposal's timetable and statement of resources required.
 - Permanent records of a performance/exhibition element of a creative production thesis should be comprised of a CD/DVD compilation of a video, audio or digital recording of a performance or exhibition, or a combination of these; in some instances a professional exhibition catalogue may be an alternative.
- 6.3 Where candidates use the services of an editor, web designer, video editor, camera operator, photographer or other technical support, full acknowledgement of the role of any person or people providing such support needs to be attributed in the thesis.
- 6.4 Candidates should familiarise themselves with Curtin University's regulations for digital submission of theses.

Further Reading

- Barrett, Estelle and Bolt, Barbara, eds. *Practice As Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. London: Taurus, 2007.
- Biggs, Michael. "The Role of 'the Work' in Research." *Practice as Research in Performance National Conference*. 11-14 September 2003. <http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/biggs.htm>
- Bolt, Barbara. *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*. London; New York: Taurus, 2004.
- Bourke, Nike and Philip Neilsen. "The Problem of the Exegesis in Creative Writing Higher Degrees." *Text 3* (April 2004). Special Issue. *Illuminating the Exegesis*. Ed. Julie Fletcher and Allan Mann. <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/bourke.htm>
- Carter, Paul. *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004.
- Kroll, Jeri. "The Role of the Examiner: Scholar, Reviewer, Critic, Judge, Mentor." *Text 8.2* (October 2004). <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct04/kroll.htm>
- Martin, Elaine and Booth, Judith, eds. *Art Based Research: A Proper Thesis?* Altona, Vic.: Common Ground, with Victoria University, 2006.
- Milech, Barbara and Schilo, Ann. "'Exit Jesus' Relating the exegesis and the Creative/Production Components of a Research Thesis." *Text 3* (April 2004). Special Issue. *Illuminating the Exegesis*. Ed. Julie Fletcher and Allan Mann. <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/milechschilo.htm>
- Owen, Christine. "Academic Research and Creative Writing: Redrawing the Map and Finding One's Allies." *Text 10.2* (October 2006). <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct06/owen.htm>
- Snell, Ted. "Exhibitions as Examinations." Paper presented at John Curtin Gallery's Public Program of Lectures and Floor-talks, with the dOFa07 Exhibition. Perth: Curtin University of Technology. 9 May 2007. <http://hgso.curtin.edu.au/research/>
- Sullivan, G. *Art practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005.