

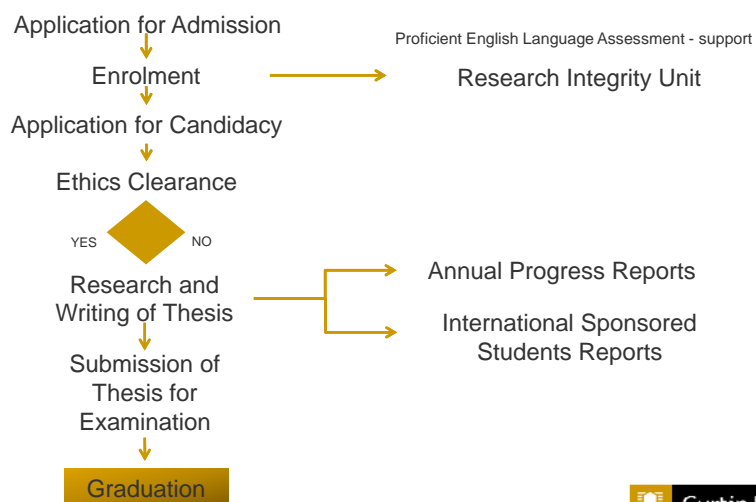


Thesis Preparation & Submission

Professor Garry Allison

22 September 2016

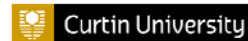
Overview of the Research Degree Process



In this seminar:

- Who does what
- Preparation
- Submission
- Examination
- Perspectives from examiners

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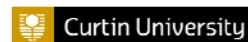


What do research students do?

They are expected to:

- prepare (with the help of their supervisor) their thesis as a comprehensive academic/scholarly argument in approved format
- submit thesis chapters to the Turnitin links for originality checking (in the Research Integrity unit on Blackboard)
- submit the thesis, appropriately acknowledging IP, copyright and other issues
- make amendments, if required by examiners, and submit final thesis

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What about the supervisor

Supervisors are expected to:

- supervise the research contents and writing of the thesis to a high academic standard
- read the thesis as it evolves and provide timely feedback
- ensure that examiners are appointed in good time
- assist the student to make any required amendments to the thesis based on the examiners comments

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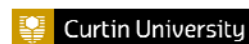


What are thesis examiners asked to do?

They are asked to:

- evaluate the thesis against a given set of criteria
- make a recommendation as to how the thesis should be classified
- write a report providing the grounds for their recommendation

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Preparing the thesis

Submission as:

- Text –
 - Doctoral max 100,000 words
 - Masters max 60,000 words
- Exegesis and creative work
- Series of published papers
- All need abstract of at least 200 words

<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate/current-students/thesis-preparation/>

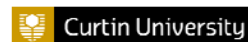
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Thesis by Publication

- Permitted by Curtin but not the norm
- Must include introduction, literature review, conclusions
- Only papers published in peer review scholarly media during the period of enrolment may be included
- The number of papers included should be sufficient to constitute a significant and original contribution to knowledge
- Suggested number of papers 4 or 5 substantial papers
- Students should be first author and major contributor

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Documenting Authorship - Rules

- HDR Rules 10 and 11 – Section 11 (e)
 - (vi) any published paper of which the candidate is a joint author may only be included in the thesis provided the work done by the candidate is clearly identified. The candidate must provide to the Office of Research and Development at the time of submission of the thesis a written statement from each co-author attesting to the candidate's contribution to a joint publication included as part of the thesis.

See also '[Information Regarding Authorship and Joint Authorship for HDR students and Supervisors](#)'

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Documenting Authorship – *Guidelines for Thesis by Publication*

- The written statements of the co-authors may take the following form and copies of these statements should be included as appendices at the end of the thesis:

To Whom It May Concern

I, [*Full Name of Candidate*], contributed (*insert details of the Candidate's contributions to each component of the research reported in the publication*) to the paper/publication entitled (*insert reference details*).

(*Signature of Candidate*)

I, as a Co-Author, endorse that this level of contribution by the candidate indicated above is appropriate.

(*Full Name of Co-Author 1*)

(*Signature of Co-Author 1*)

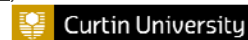
(*Full Name of Co-Author 2*)

(*Signature of Co-Author 2*)

(*Full Name of Co-Author 3*)

(*Signature of Co-Author 3*)

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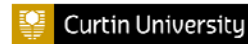


Submission:

The paperwork

- Title page approval
 - Copyright and Release of Thesis for Examination (including Supervisor approval)
 - Short (75 word) abstract
 - Evidence of Research Integrity Training completion.
 - Submit thesis as: pdf and temporary hard bound copy (only if requested by examiner)
 - *Note: Thesis will **only** be accepted by examinations office where the Nomination of Examiners form has been received*
- (See <http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate/current-students/thesis-submission/>)

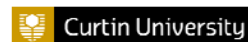
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Thesis Examining Panel

- Chair of the Thesis Committee
- Two Examiners
- Masters – one examiner must be external to Curtin
- Doctoral – both examiners must be external to Curtin
- Examiners should not be associated with candidate, supervisors or university such that there is a real or perceived conflict of interest
- Identity of examiners is confidential until examination is complete

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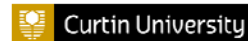


The examination

We send the examiners:

- detailed instructions to provide context of the thesis in relation to the degree
- criteria against which to evaluate the thesis
- guidelines to complete the assessment
- the thesis
- honorarium payment form

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Criteria to Examine a Doctoral Thesis

"In particular, the thesis should demonstrate that the candidate has:

- a) adequately surveyed literature relevant to the thesis;
- b) adequate skills in the gathering and critical analysis of information and report presentation;
- c) demonstrated the capacity to conceive, design and carry to completion independent research; and
- d) made a substantial, original and significant contribution to the knowledge or understanding in the field of study.

In assessing the thesis, the examiners should prepare a report on the prescribed form, indicating whether the criteria in (a) - (d) have been satisfied and, if not, what modifications are necessary to reach this standard."

(See Advice for Examiners for doctoral <http://17986-presscdn-0-31.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/08/TE-AdviceExaminers-Doctoral-2016.pdf>)

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Criteria to Examine a **Master's** Thesis

“In particular, the thesis should demonstrate that the candidate has:

- a) adequately surveyed literature relevant to the thesis;
- b) adequate skills in the gathering and analysis of information and report presentation;
- c) demonstrated the capacity to conceive, design and carry to completion independent research; and
- d) made a substantial contribution to the knowledge or understanding in the field of study.

In assessing the thesis, the examiners should prepare a report on the prescribed form, indicating whether the criteria in (a) - (d) have been satisfied and, if not, what modifications are necessary to reach this standard.”

(See Advice for Examiners Masters degrees <http://17986-presscdn-0-31.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/08/TE-AdviceExaminers-Masters-2016.pdf>)

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What does an examiner send to us?

Examiners send:

- cover page of the examination report (provides an overall assessment)
- grounds for recommendation (which explains the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis)
- Annotated thesis, if applicable

(See <http://17986-presscdn-0-31.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/08/TE-ExamRptExample-14-09-16.pdf>, under heading **Thesis Examination – Examination Report Form Example Only**)

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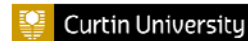
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What about the paperwork?

Deal with paperwork so that the process is expedited, not delayed

- Nomination of Examiners form must be in before submission – check with your supervisor
- Don't sign off without checking for accuracy and completeness
- Consider the entire examination process
- Supervisors should ensure students KNOW what paperwork is required

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Examiner Report Form – Recommendation (1)

Examiners select only one of the five recommendations below:

- **A** The thesis be classified as **PASSED with no requirement for correction other than minor typographical or editorial matters.** The Chairperson of the Thesis Committee will require that the candidate correct such errors as pointed out by the Examiner; or
- **B1** The thesis be classified as **PASSED** after the candidate has **made minor textual and/or structural amendments** to the satisfaction of the Chairperson of the Thesis Committee as outlined in the Examiner's Report; or

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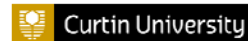


Examiner Report Form – Recommendation (2)

- The thesis be classified as PASSED provided the candidate has **revised specific sections of the thesis** to the satisfaction of the **B2** Chairperson of the Thesis Committee as outlined in the Examiner’s Report. The Examiner may specify this category for a thesis which requires substantive revisions that will not change the substantive conclusions of the thesis; or



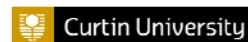
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Examiner Report Form – Recommendation (3)

- The Thesis be **SUBMITTED IN A REVISED FORM FOR RE-EXAMINATION** by the original Examiner after further research, rewriting, re-organisation, and/or reconceptualisation. The **C** Examiner may specify this category for a thesis which requires major, substantive amendments. In the report the Examiner shall provide detailed guidance to the candidate to assist revision; or
- The thesis be classified as **FAILED, without right to resubmit the thesis**, on the basis that a significant amount of additional **F** research work and/or major substantive revision will not raise the thesis to an acceptable standard.

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Higher Degree by Research Completions

Result	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Pass (A)	94%	92%	94%	93%	93%	95%	93%
Pass (B1&2)							
Resubmit (C)	6%	8%	6%	7%	7%	4%	7%
F	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Totals (n)	191	202	224	250	284	300	294

Key to Result Column:

P: Pass, no amendment

A: Pass, having been amended (includes B1 and B2 options)

R: Pass, having been resubmitted

F: Fail

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How do examiners work through the thesis?

1. Most begin by reading the Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion. Examiners open the thesis with the intent to pass it.
2. Look for errors. If you can not number pages or spell common words correctly, if you incorrectly label or format figures and tables, incorrectly say the examiners research used rabbits instead of rats, the examiner will then question your ability to conduct the actual research. ...
3. Read the rest of the thesis. Try to make the thesis look great....
4. Go back to the beginning. Try to make the thesis look great....

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Questions examiners ask themselves...

- How would they have tackled the problem set out in the abstract and the title?
- What questions would they like answers to?
- Do the conclusions follow on from the introduction?
- How well does the candidate explain what he/she is doing?
- Is the bibliography up-to-date and substantial enough?
- Are the results worthwhile?
- How much work has actually been done?
- What is the intellectual depth and rigour of the thesis?
- Is this actually 'research' - is there a scholarly argument?

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What do we know about how examiners examine theses?

Considerable Australian research has analysed examiners' reports.

The findings indicate that:

- Examiners require all of the normal forms of assistance which should be provided to any reader.
- They appreciate work that is logically presented, focused, succinct, summarised and in which signposts are used to help readers to understand the path taken through the work...
- If work is poorly presented examiners tend to lose confidence in the candidate and may think that there are deeper problems, such as superficial conceptualisation and a lack of critical analysis.

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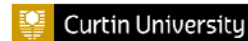
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First impressions count!!! (1)

First impressions of the quality of the thesis are usually formed by the end of the second or third chapter of the thesis - often by the end of the literature review.

“A good indicator is the way the candidate reviews the literature and their overall grasp of what’s going on”.

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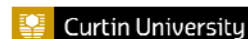
First impressions count!!! (2)

If it looks as if the student grasps the problem then this examiner reads the rest with much more of a sympathetic view and he feels he can relax. If Chapter 2 is not good, then he reads the rest much more critically.

“It is unusual that if someone does a poor job of the literature review that they will suddenly improve, or vice versa”.

This examiner looks for originality, a good understanding of the subject, and at the quality of the literature review with interpretation.

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Does the research method or paradigm influence examiners?

Science/Engineering examiners looked for 'good science':

"A pertinent literature review, clear hypothesis, do-able problem, sound data analysis and methodology, and justifiable conclusions."

Social Science/Humanities

"I try in my reading of theses to understand where the student is coming from. Even if I don't agree with the perspective they have, or if there are gaps, I try to see it from their eyes and whether they have been true to what they set out to do."

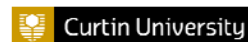
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What makes a good thesis? **Scholarship!**

- Originality, coherence, and a sense of student autonomy or independence.
- Development of a well-structured argument is highly valued.
- Most examiners look for sufficient quantity as well as quality of work.
- Reflection: students make a critical assessment of their own work; they recognise and deal with problems.
- A level of sophistication in the way students present their argument.

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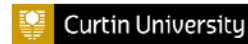


What makes a poor thesis? **Sloppiness!**

Characteristics of a poor thesis are:

- lack of coherence
- lack of understanding of the theory
- lack of confidence in writing
- researching the wrong problem
- mixed or confused theoretical and methodological perspectives
- work that is not original
- not being able to explain at the end of the thesis what had actually been argued in the thesis.

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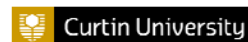


Extract from Examiner's Report (1)

To start, may I just state that from a write-up point of view, this is the worst thesis I have ever examined.

There are so many grammatical, spelling and format errors, that it is very difficult to mention all of them. It is obvious that the thesis was not checked by the candidate, and he has done himself a great disservice.

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Extract from Examiner's Report (2)

The large number of grammatical, contextual, referencing and basic inconsistencies in the thesis on this criterion is well below standards required for this level of study. Major revision of the work needs to be carried out prior to resubmission. The errors detract significantly from the content of the thesis and impair proper consideration for examination purposes. I struggled through the detailed edit of the first two chapters but gave up due to the poor presentation on these criteria. The work requires a thorough final edit prior to presentation for examination and I am concerned that the candidate's examination has been put at risk, through insufficient care in the thesis presentation and ultimately supervision.

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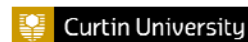


Extract from Examiner's Report (3)

The chief weakness...is the incoherent, inconsistent and often incomplete presentation of the exegesis' references. This matters, because unlike other deviations from standard practice in the project, there is nothing creative about it. Rather, it disregards [future readers] whose attention it deserves, and represents a deficiency in the candidate's repertoire of necessary skills, and impairs the impression of self-confidence conveyed by other parts of the thesis.

[13 pages of specific comments followed the main report]

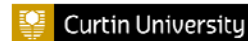
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Extract from Examiner's Report (4)

I would like to see more highly developed recommendations. I'm left with the feeling that this section was put together quickly (I may be wrong) – kind of like a novel where you get to know all the characters intimately in a complex and satisfying plot, only to find they all disappear mysteriously together in the middle of the ocean on the last page of the book. I think more work should be put into tying together the results of the physical modeling, and real data, to present, perhaps as a suggestion, some sort of stronger recommendations presented in a maybe a tabular format ...

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Extract from Examiner's Report (5)

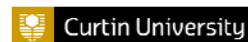
Under specific comments:

p.186-107: The reference list is, frankly speaking, a disaster. I have not cross-checked all references, but there are a number of references missing. Together I counted 65 errors, inconsistencies, missing and incomplete references.

Candidate's response:

p.186-107: I have fixed the reference list. I agree it was a disaster.

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In summary...

Positive indicators are:

- “sparkle, élan and sense of confidence with the material”
- cohesiveness and clarity
- a student who makes the ideas his/her own, with some originality of presentation
- professionalism - as demonstrated by mature comments, and the accuracy of the logic
- style and sophistication.

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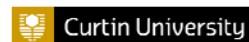


In the end.....

The final, substantive judgment is determined by:

- the student's confidence and independence
- a creative view of the topic
- the structure of the argument
- the coherence of theoretical and methodological perspectives
- evidence of critical self-assessment by the student.

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In summary...

Negative indicators are:

- *“Irritating things in the thesis such as typos and other careless textual mistakes that indicate a lack of attention to detail...Sloppiness in the text indicates sloppy research.”*
- references that are poor: *“This is usually a sign of a poor thesis - the two go hand in hand.”*

And finally

- Read the rules and guidelines
- [Thesis preparation webpage](#)
- [Thesis submission webpage](#)
- Write early, write often
- Check spelling and grammar carefully
- Ensure references are correct
- Ensure tables and figures are properly numbered
- Thesis examination enquiries - thesis@curtin.edu.au or x2111

Responding to examiners' reports

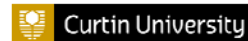
In all cases:

- Correct all typos, grammar and elements of style
- Respond to all reasonable requests for amendment/revision
- Chair provides written instructions for response to the candidate
- Write the response as if the examiner will read it

Deal with conflicting reports in a way that is fair to everyone

- Consider: *What response will result in the strongest thesis?*
(The candidate deserves to have a thesis to be proud of.)

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Examiners want the thesis to pass!

- Experienced examiners want the candidate to be awarded the PhD and will go to extraordinary lengths to enable this to happen.
- Experienced examiners should be sought for the examination process, not avoided, because of their high degree of tolerance.
- The student sees the examination as summative assessment – passing or failing.
- The examiner sees the examination more as formative assessment, i.e., an exercise in giving feedback in an effort to assist the student in further developing and improving the work.
- *"The purpose of examining is to bring the work/the student up to speed."*
- *"an opportunity for the students to be able to incorporate comments so that it sits on the Library shelf and glows more brightly."*

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