



University of  
South Australia

## Postgraduate Coursework Degrees with a significant research component

**POLICY NO:** A-49.2

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### AMENDMENTS:

- Director: Student and Academic Services - March 2006
- Director: Student and Academic Services - June 2007
- Director: Student and Academic Services – April 2011

**REFERENCE AUTHORITY:** Director: Student and Academic Services

### CROSS-REFERENCES:

- Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual
- Coursework Program Approval Manual
- [RES-10: Higher Degrees by Research, and regulations, regulations portfolio,](#)
- [RES-18: Register of Current Higher Degree by Research Supervisors](#)
- [Code of Good Practice: Research degrees management and supervision](#)
- [University Activities - Intellectual Property: Ownership & Commercialisation Guidelines](#)
- A-47: Student Fees
- A-48: Enrolment
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- A18: Selection and entry to programs

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### Preamble

The University has a number of academic policies designed to manage coursework programs, and a suite of academic regulations for the management of higher degrees by research. However, some programs incorporate significant research and coursework components, namely:

- Coursework professional doctorates that have a significant research component (as defined below); and
- Coursework masters degrees that have a significant research component (as defined below).

This policy therefore describes how the research and the coursework components in each of these two awards are to be managed, with reference to existing policies and regulations where applicable.

Not subject to this policy are:

- Higher degrees by research (PhD, professional doctorate (research) and masters by research). These are subject to separate research (RES) policies and associated regulations cross referenced above.
- Coursework masters degrees and coursework professional doctorates that do not incorporate a significant research component. Both of these awards are subject to the coursework policy framework cross referenced above.
- Graduate certificate and graduate diploma programs, neither of which is expected to contain significant research components, as defined below. Both of these awards are subject to the coursework policy framework cross referenced above.

## Definitions

**DRMC** refers to the Division Research Management Committee. This committee can delegate relevant functions and responsibilities under clause 4.1.2 and so the term **DRMC/d** has been used throughout the policy to refer to the committee or its delegate.

**EFTSL** refers to Equivalent Full-Time Student Load, and is a measure used by DEST and defined under the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

**Research work** has the same meaning as provided in the Academic Regulations for the Research Degree of Doctor of (Discipline) and means 'any combination of a thesis, dissertation, and portfolio of work, exegesis, artefact, published articles or written project, as specified for the particular program'.

**Significant research component** means a course or group of courses assessed solely on the basis of research work produced by the student, and which comprises at least one third but less than two thirds of the total EFTSL for that program. Research work that is not deemed under this definition to be 'significant' is managed as a coursework component under University policy. Programs with two thirds or more research are deemed to be research programs to be managed by research policies and regulations.

## Policy

### 1. Program Characteristics

**1.1** The coursework professional doctorate is a rigorous program of advanced study and research, designed specifically to meet the needs of industry and professional groups.

**1.1.1** The coursework component is expected to build on students' professional expertise by exposing them to leading and challenging ideas in their fields.

**1.1.2** The research component is expected to contribute significantly to the development of the profession.

**1.2** The coursework masters degree is an advanced program of study and research, designed to provide expert knowledge of a relevant field of study.

**1.2.1** The coursework component is expected to lead to the acquisition or enhancement of specific professional or vocational skills and knowledge.

**1.2.2** The research component is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of a particular field of academic or professional specialisation.

## **2. Program Structure**

**2.1** The standard coursework professional doctorate comprises 108 units, equivalent to 3 years full-time study (3 EFTSL) and may consist of a combination of coursework and research components.

**2.1.1** A significant research component is less than two-thirds but at least one-third of the overall program.

**2.1.2** Undergraduate courses must not form part of the program schedule for coursework professional doctorates.

**2.2** The standard coursework masters degree comprises 54 units, equivalent to 1.5 years full-time study (1.5 EFTSL) and may consist of a combination of coursework and research components.

**2.2.1** A significant research component is less than two-thirds but at least one-third of the overall program and will be a minor thesis or project, according to the nature of the work being produced and the expected outcome.

**2.2.2** Undergraduate courses do not usually form part of the program schedule for coursework masters degrees. Where it is appropriate that they do so, teaching and learning and assessment variations must be detailed in the program approval documentation.

**2.2.3** Where entry is from a completed honours degree, a degree with honours, or a bachelors degree of four or more years duration (or equivalent), the program may comprise 48 or 36 units.

**2.2.4** Where entry is from a 3 year bachelor degree or equivalent, the program may comprise 48 or 36 units, provided it is in response to a specific professional need and that the Division demonstrates this to Academic Board as part of the program approval process.

## **3. Program Approval**

**3.1** The Academic Standards and Quality Committee will recommend to Academic Board the approval of coursework professional doctorates and coursework masters degrees, in accordance with the University's Program Approval Manual.

**3.2** Where necessary Research Degrees Committee and Academic Standards and Quality Committee will consult on any issues associated with the significant research components of the award.

**3.3** A Division which proposes to enrol students in professional doctorates with significant research components must have appropriate staff listed on the University's register of postgraduate research degree supervisors.

## **4. Program Management**

**4.1** The Division Research Management Committee (DRMC), or equivalent body, has oversight of the significant research components of both coursework professional doctorates and coursework masters degrees, including responsibility for considering research proposals, monitoring progress in significant research components, and examination procedures.

**4.1.1** The DRMC or equivalent body may delegate any or all of its powers and responsibilities under this policy for any aspect of the management of postgraduate coursework degrees to the relevant school committee, which may in turn make reference to or seek advice from the Division Research Management Committee.

**4.1.2** The power of delegation provided in clause 4.1.1 may not be further delegated.

- 4.2 The progress of students in other components of both coursework professional doctorates and coursework masters degrees will be managed under the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.

## Procedures

### 1. Admission and Enrolment

*The University's academic policies on enrolment, recognition of prior learning and selection and entry apply to all components of both the coursework professional doctorate and coursework masters degree. An additional procedure is specified below for students who need extra time to complete a significant research component.*

- 1.1 The minimum entry requirement for a coursework professional doctorate and a coursework masters degree are specified in the University's academic policy on selection and entry.
- 1.2 Credit, exemption, or studies-in-lieu for coursework professional doctorates and coursework masters degrees will be granted in accordance with the provisions of University's academic policy on recognition of prior learning.
- 1.3 For both the coursework professional doctorate and coursework masters degree, enrolment will be into unit-based courses specified in the program schedule approved by Academic Board.
- 1.4 Significant research components will also be represented as unit-based course enrolments. Schools may grant students an extension to complete the requirements of the component. Such extensions will not be indicated on a student record, and will not attract a tuition fee. Extensions or extra time to re-submit or amend following examination may be granted by the DRMC/d but will also not be entered as an enrolment on the student record or be subject to a tuition fee.

### 2. Teaching and Supervision

*The teaching and supervision procedures for significant research components are specified here. Other components are managed according to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.*

- 2.1 The coursework component of coursework professional doctorates and coursework masters degrees will be directed by the Program Director and subject to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.
- 2.2 A practice component may only be carried out within a business, community, educational, industrial, government, research or other organisation approved by the Division. The procedures for practicum, field and clinical placements, as set out in the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual, apply.
- 2.2.1 A student undertaking a practice component must be supervised by staff who are recognised by the relevant Division as providing leadership in the relevant professional field. Students may be supervised by professional leaders external to the University provided they are approved by the Division, however, the Program Director/Course Coordinator and/or Principal Supervisor, where appropriate, is responsible for monitoring the progress of the student.
- 2.3 For the significant research component, a Principal Supervisor must be appointed for each student. An associate supervisor or supervisors may also be appointed. It is the responsibility of the Division to ensure that:
- 2.3.1 The Principal Supervisor is suitably qualified to supervise the student and has relevant knowledge, expertise and interest in the student's research area. Supervisors must have a qualification of at least equivalent standard to that being undertaken by the student, or have equivalent standing (qualifications and experience).

- 2.3.2** For professional doctorates only, supervisors are on the University's register of postgraduate research degree supervisors.
- 2.3.3** Supervisors can reasonably be expected to provide supervision for the duration of the component.
- 2.3.4** Where a principal or associate supervisor retires, resigns or is unable to perform his/her role for a period of at least six weeks, then an appropriate replacement is made.
- 2.3.5** At least one supervisor is a member of academic staff of the University and additional supervisors are adjuncts of the University for the duration of the supervision.
- 2.3.6** Supervisors of onshore international students are able to supervise a student residing in Adelaide, as required under the ESOS Act.
- 2.3.7** Students are consulted about their nominated supervisors, and agree to work with the supervisors before the commencement of the research component (including any replacement supervisors as needed in 2.3.3).
- 2.4** For the significant research component, students must develop a research proposal for approval in line with the specific program requirements before commencing the research component. Students will be formally notified of the approval or otherwise of their research proposal.
- 2.5** Principal supervisors must ensure that students undertaking research are made aware of the University's Intellectual Property: Ownership and Commercialisation Guidelines, and the full range of relevant University research policies, including those covering issues of ethics and compliance relevant to the proposed research project and the student's obligations for ethics approval.
- 3. Academic Progress**  
*The procedures for review and assessment of academic progress during significant research components are specified here. Other components are managed according to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.*
- 3.1** As part of good teaching practice, academic staff and supervisors responsible for the coursework and research components are required to monitor the performance of a student, and ensure that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected is brought to the student's attention. Regular contact between the student and supervisors/teaching staff is encouraged, to facilitate the early identification of problems and the provision of timely academic counselling.
- 3.2** Student progress in the significant research component of a coursework professional doctorate will be formally reviewed at least twice a year.
- 3.3** Student progress in the significant research component of a coursework masters degree will be formally reviewed at the expected midpoint of the research component.
- 3.4** During the significant research component of either a coursework professional doctorate or a coursework masters program, the Program Director/Course Coordinator will specify timelines by which students must detail progress toward their stated research objectives, in a report, to enable review of their academic progress.
- 3.5** The Program Director/Course Coordinator may meet with the student and Principal Supervisor to discuss and monitor the student's progress. The Program Director/Course Coordinator will then add any appropriate additional comments to the report, and forward the report to the DRMC/d.

**3.6** The DRMC/d will consider the report and a recommendation will be made regarding continuation within the research component.

#### **4. Unsatisfactory Progress**

*The procedures for managing unsatisfactory progress in coursework components of either program are specified in the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual. Once a student has entered a significant research component alternate procedures are specified here.*

**4.1** Unsatisfactory progress in the significant research component of a coursework professional doctorate is defined as:

- a)** failing to provide a research proposal within the specified time or to an acceptable standard; or
- b)** failing to secure the appropriate ethics and/or compliance approvals for the conduct of the research; or
- c)** not making sufficient progress toward stated objectives of the research component, in the opinion of the Principal Supervisor or Program Director/Course Coordinator (based on factual evidence); or
- d)** failing to otherwise comply with the policy, procedures and regulations of the University.

Where the Program Director determines that unsatisfactory progress has been made under clauses a) or c), the student will be provided with an opportunity to defend their research proposal, or their performance towards the stated objectives, before the DRMC/d.

**4.2** Unsatisfactory progress in the significant research component of a coursework masters degree will be defined in the course information booklet and assessed by the Program Director. A written report will be provided to the DRMC/d as per 3.6 above.

**4.3** The DRMC/d will determine whether or not progress has been satisfactory upon receipt of a research proposal or progress report regarding the significant research component of either a coursework professional doctorate or a coursework masters program, and, where applicable, after hearing a student's defence of their research proposal or their performance towards the stated objectives.

**4.4** Where a student's progress is deemed to have been unsatisfactory, the DRMC/d will determine any conditions that the student is required to meet, and any timeframes over which such conditions must be met, in order for the student's progress status to be revised to 'satisfactory'. The chair of the DRMC/d will write to the student, informing the student that his/her progress has been deemed unsatisfactory. The letter must include the conditions to be met for the student's progress status to be revised, the timeframes over which such conditions must be met, and a copy of this policy.

**4.5** The student will be required to meet with the Program Director/Course Coordinator, and receive academic counselling to assist them in meeting the required conditions. The Program Director/Course Coordinator will make a brief written record of the meeting with the student, and this record, together with a copy of the letter informing the student of unsatisfactory progress will be retained on the student's file.

**4.6** If the student subsequently does not meet such required conditions in the specified timeframes, the DRMC/d may consider precluding the student. If the committee decides in favour of preclusion, the student will be notified by registered mail. The letter to the student will include:

**4.6.1** a detailed description of why the student's progress has been found to be unsatisfactory; and

**4.6.2** confirmation that their enrolment in the program will be discontinued; and

**4.6.3** explanation that re-admission to the program, or another program at the same level, will not normally be considered for 2 years, must be through normal admissions channels and cannot be guaranteed. Students who gain re-admission will be classified as new students for the purpose of charging fees and assessing eligibility for Commonwealth support or assistance; and

**4.6.4** information on the appeals processes, including a copy of this policy and the Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.

The decision to preclude will be subject to the student's right of appeal to the Division Appeals Committee. Appeals to the Division Appeals Committee, and where applicable to the Student Appeals Committee, will be managed under the Academic Review of Student Progress section of the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.

## **5. Academic Misconduct**

**5.1** Academic misconduct will be managed under the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual for all components of either a coursework professional doctorate or a coursework masters program.

## **6. Leave of Absence**

**6.1** Leave of absence will be managed under the University's Enrolment policy for all components of either a coursework professional doctorate or a coursework masters program.

## **7. Submission of the significant research component**

*The procedures for submission of the significant research component of either program are specified here. Assessment of all other components will be managed according to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.*

**7.1** Coursework professional doctorate students must submit a minor thesis/project/body of research work to the DRMC/d that:

- a)** is an accurate account of the research program; and
- b)** is capable of being assessed under the criteria for examination; and
- c)** conforms with the guidelines for the presentation of theses provided in the Academic Regulations for the PhD; and
- d)** meets the requirements specified in the program approval documentation approved by Academic Board.

**7.2** Submission requirements for significant research components of a coursework masters degree will be detailed in the relevant course information booklet.

**7.3** In either program, students must give at least one month's notice in writing of intention to submit the research component for examination. The notice should indicate whether the student is to present artefacts within the thesis. At the same time, the student should provide by email a summary of not more than 500 words on the content of the research component. The summary will be forwarded to the examiners.

**7.4** The research component must be the original work of the student, carried out with the approval of the DRMC/d during the period of the candidature. The student must state clearly and fully the extent of any collaboration and must identify the parts of the research that are not the result of the student's own work. Work which has been submitted for any other academic award may not be submitted as the main content of the research component. Where the main content consists of any significant extension or elaboration of the student's earlier work, that portion referring to previous work must be clearly indicated.

- 7.5** When the student submits the research component, the Principal Supervisor will provide a statement to the DRMC/d, setting out:
- a)** the extent to which the work, ie data collection, data analysis and writing, was carried out by the student and, if an editor was used, the extent of the involvement of the editor;
  - b)** whether the work is properly presented and is worthy of examination; and
  - c)** whether the work has been conducted in a responsible manner and in agreement with approved research policies for human research ethics, animal ethics, or other research policies appropriate to the nature of the research - this last statement should also be countersigned by the Program Director/Course Coordinator.

- 7.6** The length of the research component should be in accordance with the requirements of the program as approved by Academic Board through the program approval process.

## **8. Examination**

*The procedures for examination of the significant research component of either program are specified here. Assessment of all other components will be managed according to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.*

- 8.1** When the DRMC/d receives a notice of intent to submit from a student, the committee will appoint two examiners. A reserve examiner will also be appointed in case one of the appointed examiners fails to return the examination report within the required time.

- 8.2** The examiners will be appointed in accordance with the following requirements:

- a)** Examiners for coursework professional doctorates will normally hold a doctorate (or have equivalent standing, qualifications and experience). Examiners for coursework masters degrees will normally hold a masters degree (or have equivalent standing, qualifications and experience). All examiners must be of high academic standing including recent research activity in the field in which the student's research program has been conducted.
- b)** A student's primary and/or associate supervisors must not be appointed as examiners.
- c)** Both examiners of the research component of a coursework professional doctorate must be external to the University. For coursework masters degrees, at least one examiner must be external to the University.

Students have the right to be consulted about the choice of examiners, but do not have the right to nominate examiners.

- 8.3** After approval by the DRMC/d, the Principal Supervisor will initiate the invitation to the examiner and the Division/School office will confirm the examiners' availability and despatch the research component to them for assessment. Arrangement for the examination of artefacts will be made by the Division/School in conjunction with the Principal Supervisor.

- 8.4** Where an examiner fails to return an assessment within the required time, the DRMC/d may decide to use a reserve examiner.

- 8.5** The criteria for examining research work resulting from a significant research component of a coursework professional doctorate are:

- a)** The extent to which the student has made a significant and original contribution to knowledge about professional practice and a contribution to knowledge of fact and/or theory;
- b)** The demonstration of a critical appreciation of the literature relevant to the research project;



- c) The quality of design and structure of the investigation (or set of investigations);
  - d) The presentation of information in a manner consistent with the relevant discipline(s);
  - e) The demonstration of a critical appraisal of a student's own work relative to that of others; and
  - f) Evidence of independent and critical thought.
- 8.6** The criteria for examining research work resulting from a significant research component of a coursework masters degree are:
- a) The student's ability to demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of the literature, artefacts and theoretical understandings relevant to the field of study.
  - b) The student's capacity to demonstrate critical analysis in applying research approaches and, where appropriate, interpreting results.
  - c) The extent to which the minor thesis/project makes a contribution to knowledge and/or the application of knowledge within the field of study.
  - d) The quality of the presentation of the written component, including:
    - i) the clarity of expression
    - ii) the accuracy and appropriateness of presentation of results
    - iii) the quality and relevance of illustrative material (such as graphs, tables, illustrations)
    - iv) the relevance and accuracy of citations and references
    - v) the development of a coherent argument, where relevant to the field of study
  - e) The quality of artefacts, if any, including:
    - i) the conceptual understanding of the relevant field
    - ii) the ideas and/or imagination demonstrated
    - iii) the technical competence
    - iv) the resolution of the artefacts
    - v) the complexity and difficulty demonstrated
- 8.7** Anonymity must be maintained during the examination process, but all reports of examiners will be made available to students, unless indicated otherwise by the examiner. During the examination process no dialogue about the examination is to be conducted by the supervisor and/or the student with the examiners involved, unless agreed by the DRMC/d.
- 8.8** The examiners must independently assess the research component for either program and recommend one of the following assessment options to the DRMC/d:
- 1)** Pass forthwith; or
  - 2)** Pass following minor corrections, certified by the DRMC/d that the changes have been made; or
  - 3a)** Pass following major corrections. 'I delegate the DRMC/d or nominee the responsibility of being satisfied that the required corrections have been made'; or
  - 3b)** Pass, following major corrections. 'I would like to see the research again in order to be satisfied that the corrections have been made'; or
  - 4)** Revise and re-submit after a period of further study for re-examination (by the same examiners where possible); or
  - 5)** Fail.

- 8.9** On receipt of all examiners' reports, the Division/School office will despatch the reports to the student, and the Principal Supervisor, with copies to the Program Director/Course Coordinator and the chair of the DRMC/d. The Principal Supervisor must provide documentation and a recommendation as to the final assessment option (and any subsequent action required) to the chair of the DRMC/d within six weeks of receipt of the examiners' reports. All examiners' reports are to be taken into account when preparing a recommendation.
- 8.10** If reports are conflicting, the chair of the DRMC/d will present the case and recommendation for each conflicting result at the next meeting. The Principal Supervisor is also required to be present at the committee meeting. The DRMC/d may determine that:
- dialogue be conducted with all or any one of the examiners
  - another examiner be appointed
  - an examiner's advice be overridden
  - an independent reviewer be appointed, and/or
  - advice from the Research Degrees Committee be sought in relation to any matters of concern.

**9. Amendments, Re-submission, Re-examination, and Failure**

*The procedures for subsequent action following examination of the significant research component of either program are specified here. Moderation and grading of all other components will be managed according to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.*

- 9.1** In the case of a significant research component that has been assessed as passed, subject to corrections being made, the revised copy must be submitted to the DRMC/d within a maximum of six weeks of the notification of the need for revision, with a statement as follows:
- In the case of Assessment Option (2), statements are required from the Principal Supervisor and the relevant Division committee, each confirming that the revisions have been made and are satisfactory for the award of a degree;
  - In the case of Assessment Option (3a) statements are required from the Principal Supervisor, one other person nominated by the chair of the DRMC/d, and the Chair of the DRMC/d, each confirming that the revisions have been made and are satisfactory for the award of a degree.
  - In the case of Assessment Option (3b) a statement is required from the original examiner who gave the assessment that the revisions have been made and are satisfactory for the award of a degree.
- 9.2** Extensions to the six weeks may be granted by the chair of the DRMC/d.
- 9.3** In the case of a research component which is to be re-submitted for examination after major revision:
- the work may be submitted once only in the revised form;
  - the written component must be submitted to the DRMC/d within six months of the notification of the requirement for revision;
  - extensions to the six months may be granted by the Dean: Research Education (or equivalent);
  - the Principal Supervisor must provide a statement to the DRMC/d that revision has occurred and that the research work is worthy of examination;

- e) re-examination of the written component of the research will be arranged by the DRMC/d; re-examination of artefacts will be conducted within the relevant School in conjunction with the DRMC/d, and the results forwarded to the DRMC/d;
  - f) the examiners may recommend only that the research component be:
    - i) passed; or
    - ii) passed with specified amendments required, but the award process may proceed; or
    - iii) failed.
- 9.4 Extensions to the six months may be granted by the chair of the DRMC/d.
- 9.5 A research component which has been failed may not be re-submitted, and the student's enrolment will be terminated, unless a student makes a successful appeal as outlined below.
- 9.6 A student may appeal to the DRMC/d to have the research work re-examined once only, provided that evidence is submitted to the satisfaction of the Committee that any of the examiners:
- a) was unqualified to examine the work; or
  - b) substantially misinterpreted the work; or
  - c) was prejudiced or biased in the assessment of the work.
- 9.7 The DRMC/d must determine whether the appeal is upheld or rejected and, if upheld, must appoint new examiners.

## 10. Eligibility for the Degree

*The procedures for finalising the eligibility of a student to graduate in the coursework professional doctorate and coursework masters degree are managed according to the University's conferral procedures for other coursework awards as outlined in policy [A-51: Graduation and Records](#)*

## 11. Final Lodgement of Significant Research Component

*The procedures for final lodgement of the significant research component of either program are specified here. All other components will be managed according to the University's Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual.*

- 11.1 Where possible three copies of the final version of any significant research component presented, amended if necessary, must be lodged with the University Library (2 copies) and in the Division (1 copy) or such other place(s) as the DRMC/d considers appropriate. The copies must include an appropriate record of artefacts, eg photographs, video recording. Where the work cannot be easily replicated to provide copies, the DRMC/d will advise on the appropriate record of the work to be lodged.
- 11.2 Wherever possible, the final version of a text based component should be in print format.
- 11.3 The author must be asked to consent in writing to the research being made available for loan or copying. Such notice of consent is to be inserted by the DRMC/d in the copy deposited in the Library. If an author does not consent to the loan or copying of their thesis; the DRMC/d can approve a restriction on circulation or copying. In any case the research will become available for loan two years after it has been deposited with the University, or such longer period as may be approved by the DRMC/d.