



Presentation of the Research Degree Thesis or Exegesis (consolidated)

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with Policy AB-58: [Research Degrees and](#) Procedure AB-58 P6: [Research Degrees Thesis Preparation and Examination](#)

A. Overview of the thesis

1. Research work is as specified in the program approval documentation and means any combination of a thesis, dissertation, portfolio of work, exegesis, creative work, published articles or written project, as specified for the particular program information. The research work submitted for examination may be known as a thesis, portfolio or folio. Research degree students submitting for examination should check with their Principal Supervisor and/or Program Director as to the requirements in that particular program. Any work presented for examination must follow these guidelines.
2. Before the research work is submitted for examination, the research degree student, with the advice of their Supervisory Panel, should ensure that it meets the University's requirements for research integrity and a very high standard of scholarly presentation has been achieved. This includes ensuring that:
 - a. the use of academic language is at a level appropriate to journal publication in the discipline;
 - b. the thesis is free of typographical and grammatical errors;
 - c. illustrative material is presented at a level of reproduction that enables examiners to assess all aspects of the work;
 - d. extraneous material does not detract from the presentation of the findings and the argument;
 - e. it is an accurate account of the research project and the research work has a title that gives an appropriately clear description of its content and an Abstract or Summary that gives a clear and accurate account of its main arguments, methodology and scope;
 - f. Commonwealth Government funding provided under the Research Training Program (RTP) is acknowledged appropriately. It is also good practice to acknowledge other financial support; and
 - g. Is assessable according to examination criteria (refer to Procedure AB-58 P6: Research Degrees Thesis Preparation and Examination).
3. A research degree student will normally make a formal presentation of the thesis to an Academic Unit/Institute/Research Centre seminar prior to the commencement of the examination process.

B. Length of thesis

4. A written doctoral thesis will normally comprise 80,000 words, and a Masters thesis will normally comprise 40,000 words. The exegesis accompanying a thesis by creative practice is normally no less than 20,000 words for a doctoral thesis and 10,000 words for a Masters degree. The word count does not include footnotes, appendices, references or tables etc.
5. If length limits have been exceeded, notification of the length and number of volumes is to be advised, so that examiners can be informed of the length of the thesis before they accept nomination.

C. Presentation of the thesis

6. Theses are submitted online in electronic form. If requested by one or more examiners, printed copies may also be required.
7. The thesis for Doctor of Philosophy, Professional Doctorate and Master of Research (excluding Doctor of Philosophy by Portfolio of Publications) is the material form of a sustained program of research that has produced original findings. The thesis may be either:
 - a. a written text comprised of conventional chapters presented as typescript; or
 - b. a written text containing a combination of peer reviewed publications and conventional chapters presented as typescript (Thesis Containing Published Research); or
 - c. creative or visual works together with an exegesis (a thesis by creative practice).
8. Research degree students presenting non-standard theses will need to obtain the prior approval of their Supervisory Panel and the Dean of Research (or delegate) before being lodged for examination. Advice supporting the submission of non-standard theses is to be provided to Student and Academic Services at the time of lodgement.
 - a. *Electronic version:* Theses submitted electronically online will normally be in Adobe Acrobat format (.pdf). For documents that require specialist software to view them (such as web pages or Multimedia presentations) the electronic media should contain all software, appropriately licensed, to enable the reader to access the files. Relevant instructions for the examiner should be included on the electronic media in this case.
 - b. *Printed version:* Theses are normally submitted for examination electronically. When a hard copy is requested by an examiner the following guidelines should normally be followed.
 - i. A thesis will normally be printed using a 12 pitch font on A4 bond paper. The thesis will normally be printed on both sides of the paper with 1.5 spacing and with quality printing.
 - ii. Quotations, footnotes and end notes should generally be printed in single spacing.
 - iii. Footnotes should be clearly separated from the text by a black line.
 - iv. Other forms of presentation may be allowed if the Dean of Graduate Studies approves, but bond paper should be used. Work previously published, if submitted, may be good quality copies of the published work, including full publication details. Material presented should comply with legislative requirements, such as copyright and intellectual property requirements.
 - v. Margins should be not less than 3.5cm on the left-hand side of the page to allow for binding and between 1.5cm and 2cm on the other three sides.
 - vi. When requested by an examiner, printed copies must be presented with a soft-cover and heat bound (i.e. sheets cannot be removed or added without evidence of tampering). Normally, strip-bound or spiral-bound thesis will not be accepted for examination.

D. Content

9. The thesis should incorporate in the following order:
 - a. A title page giving the:
 - i. title of the thesis in full;
 - ii. names and degrees of the research degree student;
 - iii. name of the university associated with the work;
 - iv. date when submitted for the degree; and
 - v. [name of the degree for which the thesis is being submitted](#).
 - b. A table of content.
 - c. A list of figures.
 - d. A list of tables.
 - e. A glossary and/or table of abbreviations.
 - f. Glossary of uncommon terms and general abbreviations used throughout the text. List all abbreviations except those in widespread use.
 - g. A summary in not more than 500 words.
 - h. A signed declaration stating:

I declare that:

this thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.
 - i. Acknowledgment of any help given or work carried out by other people or organisations, including the University of South Australia. Students who hold, or have held, support from the federal government Research Training Program (RTP) must acknowledge the Commonwealth government's contribution, via a statement mentioning the support through an "Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship", on all published material relating to the research project carried out by the recipient of a RTP Scholarship, including the thesis.
 - j. The main text.
 - k. Bibliography/references should be cited following a protocol used by a major international journal in the research degree student's area of study or as determined by the Dean of Research (or delegate).
 - l. Appendices, if any.
10. Numbering of pages - title page bears no number; sections (ii)-(viii) are numbered with small Roman numerals (bottom centre); main text onwards is numbered with Arabic numbers (bottom centre).
11. Units used in the thesis must accord with the system of international units (SI, Le Systeme International D'Unites).

E. Figures and tables

12. Figures of high quality should be drawn or photographed and inserted in the appropriate place in the text.
13. Diagrams and figures are to be labelled using a computer based graphics drawing program in a font that matches the main text. The legend should be placed beneath the figure.
14. Tables should be inserted in the appropriate place in the text, except that lengthy or bulky tables should appear as an appendix. The legend should be placed above the table.
15. Where the figure or table fills the whole A4 page, the legend should be placed on the left-hand (verso) page. Verso pages are to be prepared with a right-hand side margin not less than 3.5cm to allow for binding and 1.5cm on the other three sides.
16. Where a printed copy has been requested by the examiner, diagrams, maps, tables, etc exceeding A4 size, should be folded so as to read as a right-hand page when open.

F. Binding and lodgment with the University Library

17. Final hard bound copies are normally not required by the University. For students who want to produce one or more hard copies for themselves, their supervisor and/or their Academic Unit, the following guidelines for binding are recommended.
18. Hard bound copies of the thesis are normally sewn and bound with dark cloth on stiff covers.
19. On the spine of the final copies of the thesis should be given, in gold lettering of suitable size, normally reading from top to the bottom, the research degree student's family name and title of the thesis, abbreviated if necessary. Where the width of the spine allows, the lettering may be placed horizontally, with the title of the thesis near the top of the spine and the student's family name near the middle.
20. When published papers are submitted as evidence, they should normally be bound near the back of the thesis as an appendix. In the case of published papers of unusual size, it may be desirable to bind them in a separate volume. If they have been bound by the publisher it is desirable to keep them in a special case made and lettered to simulate a bound volume of the thesis.
21. Supplementary material such as electronic media, folded maps and other large folded sheets may be placed in a pocket inside the back cover of the bound thesis. Any material which cannot readily be kept in a pocket should be placed in a special case made and lettered to simulate a bound volume of the thesis.
22. A supplementary case or additional volume of a thesis should be distinguished by a volume number but should otherwise be uniform with the first part of the thesis in respect to colour, lettering and, as far as possible, size.
23. Refer to Procedure AB-58 P6: [Research Degrees Thesis Preparation and Examination](#), clause G for the procedure on lodgment the thesis with the University Library.

G. Additional guidelines for the presentation of a thesis containing published research

24. The University of South Australia has introduced the provision whereby theses containing published work, produced, published, or accepted for publication during the period of candidature may be submitted for examination. A thesis containing published research is different in form to a thesis by portfolio of publications. Additional guidelines for a thesis by portfolio of publications is covered in clause I.

25. The thesis is to include a combination of publications and conventional chapters. The model permits the inclusion of one or more published works, however, the body of work presented in the thesis must represent that which reaches the standard for theses in each disciplinary area. A thesis presented purely by publications will typically include at least 2-3 published works depending on the convention for each discipline and depending on the quality of the work and the international standing of the publication outlet.
26. The publication(s) included in a thesis containing published research must be part of an integrated project such that the publication(s) presented in the thesis constitute elements of a connected whole.
27. The decision regarding submitting a thesis in this format is to be made in consultation with research supervisor(s) and should occur early in the candidacy, as there are a number of issues which will influence that decision.
28. The requirements for publications included in a Thesis Containing Published Research are:
 - a. each publication must be peer reviewed and recognised for the University's publication collection;
 - b. each publication must be published or accepted for publication pending revisions for publication in significant journals, books and/or conference proceedings relevant to the discipline. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will have a list of journals and conferences that meet the University's requirement for ranked journals and conferences in the relevant Field of Research;
 - c. conference papers published in conference proceedings and book chapters can only be included where there is evidence of peer review of the full work;
 - d. for publications that have been accepted for publication pending revisions, the Principal Supervisor must provide written confirmation that revisions required by referees and/or the editor have been made. This confirmation must be incorporated in an appendix to the thesis;
 - e. each co-authored publication included in the thesis must be accompanied by a statement by the candidate describing the contribution of each author to each publication (refer to [the statement of authorship form](#)). The statements must be signed by each author and incorporated in an appendix to the thesis;
 - f. the candidate must be the greatest, or equal greatest contributor to any co-authored publications included in the thesis;
 - g. the subject matter of the publications must be closely related and form a cohesive narrative;
 - h. the publications must be compliant with copyright law and intellectual property requirements;
 - i. where copyright has been assigned to the publisher, permission will need to be sought to reproduce the work in the digital version of the thesis. It is the candidate's responsibility to obtain permission to reproduce the work in the thesis. Permission statements from publishers must be included as an appendix to the thesis; and
 - j. publications published, accepted, or submitted for publication prior to commencing the degree, either at UniSA or at another university, must not be included in the thesis.

29. Format of the thesis: in addition to the guidelines presented above, the thesis must also include:
- a. Introductory contextual statement:
 - i. indicating that the thesis is submitted as a Thesis Containing Published Research;
 - ii. describing the overall aims, objectives and significance of the study;
 - iii. explaining how published works included in the body of the thesis are critically placed in the context of the appropriate field of study and in the context of the thesis as a whole;
 - iv. indicating the contribution of each author to the publication(s).
 - b. The body of the thesis should include content that provides literature review, methodology, results and discussion. The appropriate format for the body of the thesis will depend on the convention for each discipline. Students are encouraged to discuss the proposed structure of their thesis with their supervisor to ensure it represents the best structure in the context of their work and in the context of the conventions of the discipline area.
 - c. General summary: to integrate and reconcile the various results contained in the thesis publications and relevant chapters, and to present the most significant findings of the thesis and discuss future directions of the work.
 - d. Bibliography.
 - e. Appended statements as required for published research (refer to section 8.5 Published Research).
30. Publication(s) may be reformatted to simplify production and enhance the presentation and clarity of the thesis. Reformatted papers must contain reference to the full citation of the published paper.

H. Additional guidelines for the presentation of a thesis by creative practice

31. These guidelines for the examination of theses by creative practice are based on the understanding that the research degree student will have thoroughly discussed the appropriate type of examination with their Supervisory Panel and the Academic Unit's Research Degree Coordinator before submitting their thesis for examination.
- a. A thesis by creative practice is constituted by two components, a creative work and an exegesis. It is vital that a clear relationship is established between the creative work and exegesis.
 - b. Creative work can vary widely according to the field but may include works of art and design, creative writing, moving image and digital media, music or performance.
 - c. Submission of theses by creative practice requires a viewing of the creative work. A durable record of the creative work must be submitted for examination – either as an electronic file included in the online submission, artefact materials provided in hard copy, printed material included within the body of the thesis, or as a separate insert or digital record such as a CD-ROM, DVD, USB or other permanent data storage device.
 - d. An 'exegesis' is defined in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as being an 'explanation, exposition, or interpretation'. The exegesis component in a thesis by creative practice involves the development of a directed argument supported by evidence. This is derived from the candidate's research, ranging from academic library or 'field' sources and data to reflective creative practice.

- e. The same conventions for conventional written theses apply to the exegesis.
 - f. Theses by creative practice require a 500-word 'abstract', summarising the argument outlined in the thesis, for both the creative work and the exegesis submitted for examination.
32. The guidelines for thesis examiners on the relation between the creative work and exegesis reflects the understanding that creative work is as important as the exegesis in advancing the 'argument' of the thesis, with each component forming a part, or proposition of the whole.
- a. Expectations for Master of Research theses by creative practice:
 - i. a substantial and coherent body of creative work developed for final submission and presentation;
 - ii. an exegesis of no less than 10,000 words providing a critical engagement and context for the contribution to be made through the creative work.
 - b. Expectations for PhD theses by creative practice:
 - i. a substantial coherent and original body of creative work, developed for final submission and, where relevant, public presentation, making a significant contribution to the field of research;
 - ii. an exegesis of no less than 20,000 words providing a critical context for the contribution to be made through the creative work.
 - c. The creative work, in conjunction with the exegesis, needs to be seen as equivalent to a conventional written thesis: 40,000 words and 80,000 words respectively for Masters and PhD (with commensurate expectations as to quality of argument). The balance of creative work and exegesis will be set out in the original research proposal, as approved by the Academic Unit's research proposal review panel. Notwithstanding its length, it is imperative that research degree students understand the significance of the exegesis in providing a sophisticated, well written, thoroughly researched and rigorously argued case in support of the overall thesis. Examiners are entitled to question or take issue with any or all aspects of the thesis presented for examination – whether related to the creative work or exegesis.
 - d. The outputs of the research should form a substantial, coherent and original body of creative work, judged in terms of scope and originality. The following definitions can usefully be applied:

Substantial: clear technical and conceptual significance within the relevant discipline. For the PhD an example in art might be a significant solo exhibition; in creative writing a novel; in media arts an animated computer program or feature film; in performing arts and music a theatrical production or concert. Masters level submissions will require shorter or fewer works.

Coherent: articulating a common thread, theme or proposition in a consistent and considered conceptual manner.

Original: making a significant contribution to knowledge in the particular area of creative practice.
33. The creative work
- a. In assessing the creative work examiners may consider and evaluate the following qualities:
 - i. formal invention and expressive facility;
 - ii. technical skill and understanding;

- iii. conceptual relevance and rigour;
- iv. capacity for self-critical learning; and
- v. capacity for innovation.

34. The exegesis

- a. Although the minimum length of the exegesis is set at an indicative 10,000 words and 20,000 words for Masters and PhD theses respectively, research degree students may elect to develop a more substantial document. However, this will require approval by the student's supervisors and the Academic Unit's research proposal review panel. It is important to note that the length of the exegesis is less important than the strength of the argument, and the quality of the research which underpins it.
- b. The emphasis within the thesis is upon development of a substantial and coherent body of creative work. The proposition underpinning the creative work will be supported by the exegesis.
- c. The relationship between the exegesis and creative work should be complementary, clearly articulated, and specific in relating the creative work produced to the sorts of theoretical, social, cultural and historical considerations appropriate to providing a critical and informed account of the research itself.
- d. The exegesis should demonstrate:
 - i. an articulation of the proposition or question underpinning and guiding the research;
 - ii. a clearly structured argument in support of the proposition;
 - iii. a comprehensive understanding of the methodology for conducting the research (both through the exegesis and the creative practice);
 - iv. a thorough knowledge and appropriately critical understanding of creative practice relevant to the candidate's nominated area of research;
 - v. a thorough understanding of the significant critical and theoretical references relevant to the nominated research topic;
 - vi. logical and specific links to the creative work produced during the research; and
 - vii. an indication of the contribution to knowledge (in the topic or discipline area) made through the creative practice and writing.
- e. The exegesis should not include:
 - i. only a reflection reporting on the production of the creative work;
 - ii. extended descriptions of (or claims for) the completed creative work; and
 - iii. research in an area that is not directly relevant to the creative work.

With the approval of their Supervisory Panel and the Academic Unit Research Degree Coordinator, research degree students may consider creative approaches to developing a form for the writing which might complement the creative practice. If this approach is adopted, candidates must ensure the expectations outlined above are met.

35. Preparing the creative work for submission for examination

- a. In cases where the research degree student produces multiple creative works it may help to write up abstracts of each individual creative work comprising the body of work, emphasising the aim of each and its distinguishing features, in order to make evident the links between the research and the creative practice.

- b. Each creative work should be the outcome of a process of design, preparation, drafting, editing and consultation, and have received substantial feedback from the supervisors of the research degree student, and other relevant academic staff, prior to the final submission being made ready for examination.

I. Additional guidelines for the presentation of a thesis for a PhD (by Portfolio of Publications)

- 36. A thesis for a PhD (by Portfolio of Publications) is only allowed for students admitted into the program in accordance with Procedure AB-58 P1: [Research Degrees Admission and Enrolment](#), clause B.
- 37. The thesis will consist of:
 - a. portfolio of refereed publications (refer to clause 38) based on original research
 - b. a substantive integrating written component, which is to set out:
 - i. an argument linking the papers together into a coherent theme and
 - ii. the way the publications submitted represent an advance in knowledge in the research degree student's discipline or field, or
 - iii. the application of new knowledge or critical inquiry in original ways, or
 - iv. new expressions of knowledge or critical creative insight.
- 38. The total submission must be at a standard appropriate for the award of the degree of PhD.
 - a. The integrating written component must also contain a substantial theoretical component relevant to the research degree student's discipline or field. There is no stipulated word length, as what is appropriate will vary with the nature of the submitted work and the student's discipline or field. Any additional research should only be directed towards the development of the integrating theme.
 - b. There is no minimum number of publications specified. It is expected that for most publications, the applicant will be the sole or first named author. The publications submitted should follow a coherent theme and be of a sufficient number for the body of work to constitute a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.
 - c. The submission will not include unpublished work, review articles, newspaper articles, articles in non-refereed professional journals, works where the applicant's role was that of editor, or any work that has been previously submitted to meet examination requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution.
- 39. The requirements for publications included in the portfolio are:
 - a. each publication should have been included in the portfolio submitted for application to the program, or arisen during the period of enrolment;
 - b. each publication must be peer reviewed;
 - c. each publication must be published or accepted for publication pending revisions for publication in significant journals, books and/or conference proceedings relevant to the discipline;
 - d. for publications that have been accepted for publication pending revisions, the Principal Supervisor must provide written confirmation that revisions required by referees and/or the editor have been made. This confirmation must be incorporated in an appendix to the thesis;
 - e. each co-authored publication included in the thesis must be accompanied by a statement by the candidate describing the contribution of each author to each publication. The statements must be signed by each author and incorporated in an appendix to the thesis;

- f. the candidate must be the greatest, or equal greatest contributor to any co- authored publications included in the thesis;
 - g. the subject matter of the publications must be closely related and form a cohesive narrative;
 - h. the publications must be compliant with copyright law and intellectual property requirements; and
 - i. where copyright has been assigned to the publisher, permission will need to be sought to reproduce the work in the print and digital versions of the thesis. It is the candidate's responsibility to obtain permission to reproduce the work in the thesis. Permission statements from publishers must be included as an appendix to the thesis.
40. Publication(s) may be reformatted to simplify production and enhance the presentation and clarity of the thesis. Reformatted papers must contain reference to the full citation of the published paper.

Approved by: Academic Board, 26 November 2020

Academic Board, 26 November 2022

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Enterprise, 26 October 2023 (minor amendments)