



## Research Degrees Student Research Misconduct

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### Context and Purpose

This procedure details the processes involved where there is a possible breach of examination procedure and/or an allegation of research misconduct on the part of a research degree student.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with Policy AB-58: [Research Degrees](#) and its Definitions.

### Responsibility

All research degree students and supervisors are required to adhere to high standards of research integrity at all times and to comply with all relevant codes and legislation.

Research Degree Coordinators and Deans of Research (or delegate) are responsible to apply due diligence in the investigation of research misconduct when conducting an Initial Inquiry or Formal Inquiry, and to maintain detailed records of information, correspondence, the chronology of events, and reasons for determinations.

All staff involved in investigation of a matter of research misconduct are responsible to maintain records of all material that form part of the investigation, communications, the chronology of events, and reasons for determinations.

Student and Academic Services are responsible for maintaining the research degree student record (student record). Decisions and outcomes made in accordance with this procedure must be documented and a copy provided to Student and Academic Services, to be retained on the student record.

All other procedural responsibilities are detailed in this procedure.

### Confidentiality

Refer to [M-1 Privacy Policy](#).

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### Procedure

#### A. Possible breach of examination procedures

1. A possible breach of examination procedure may be raised by an external party, including an examiner or academic from another university, or by a staff member or another research degree student. Possible breaches should be discussed in the first instance with the Dean of Research (or delegate).
2. The Dean of Research (or delegate) directs any possible breach of examination procedure to be managed by the Research Degree Examinations and Quality Panel.
3. The Research Degree Examinations and Quality Panel determines the appropriate course of action to ensure the integrity of the examination process and outcome.

#### B. Alleged research misconduct

4. Where a staff member or another research degree student has concerns that the action of a research degree student may involve research misconduct, an initial inquiry will take place, following the process detailed in clause C.

5. Where an external party, including an examiner or academic from another university, has concerns that the action of a research degree student may involve research misconduct, the issue may proceed to a Formal Inquiry process, as detailed in clauses C and D.
6. Where a research degree student who is the subject of alleged research misconduct is also employed by the University, the processes detailed in [Policy AB-66 Research Integrity](#) and its associated Procedure may apply, and also [Section 9 - Disciplinary Procedures of the University of South Australia Enterprise Agreement 2019](#).
7. Where a research degree student has concerns that the action of a staff may involve research misconduct, they must follow the process detailed in [Policy AB-66 Research Integrity](#) and its associated Procedure.

### **C. Initial inquiry into alleged research misconduct**

8. Where a staff member or another research degree student has concerns that the action of a research degree student may involve research misconduct, they first discuss the issue with an appropriate Research Degree Coordinator.
9. The Research Degree Coordinator may request information or material from the research degree student to assist in their inquiries.
10. If the Research Degree Coordinator believes the issue warrants further explanation he/she will notify the research degree student and Principal Supervisor within five (5) working days, detailing their concerns and requesting that the research degree student attend a meeting with the supervisor(s) and Research Degree Coordinator to discuss the matter. The meeting should occur within 20 working days of the initial notification to the research degree student.
11. The initial inquiry meeting may proceed whether or not the research degree student responds or attends.
12. At the initial inquiry meeting, the research degree student may be assisted or represented by:
  - a. a representative of [USASA](#), or in the case of offshore students, a representative of the UniSA partner institution, or
  - b. any staff member or student of the University.
13. As a result of the initial inquiry meeting with the research degree student and the supervisor(s), the Research Degree Coordinator may determine that no research misconduct has occurred. In this instance, no further action will be taken, and no record of the allegation will be entered into the student's record.
14. If, as a result of the initial inquiry meeting with the research degree student and supervisor(s), the Research Degree Coordinator determines that the actions of the research degree student did involve research misconduct and there is evidence to support this, the Research Degree Coordinator will provide academic counselling to the research degree student and may also stipulate one of the following courses of action:
  - a. a requirement that the research degree student undertakes further research, and if necessary:
    - i. resubmits the work, and
    - ii. corrects the public record for any publications arising.
  - b. a recommendation that the matter proceeds to a Formal Inquiry.
  - c. an alternative course of action, appropriate to the case.
15. A record of the outcome determined, according to clause C.14, is provided to the research degree student and Principal Supervisor within five (5) working days of the initial inquiry meeting, and a copy is provided to Student and Academic Services to be retained on the student record.

16. If the Research Degree Coordinator determines a course of action other than C.14.b., and the research degree student does not agree with the proposed course of action, the matter will proceed to a Formal Inquiry.

#### **D. Formal Inquiry into alleged research misconduct**

17. A Formal Inquiry can be initiated in one (1) of two (2) ways:
  - a. Upon receipt of advice from the Research Degree Coordinator following an initial inquiry, the Dean of Research (or delegate) will review the case and the evidence provided to determine whether the case should proceed to Formal Inquiry. The Dean of Research (or delegate) may request further information or material from the research degree student. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will, within ten (10) working days, provide the research degree student and the Principal Supervisor with notification of the Formal Inquiry, and a report providing details of the allegations and documentary evidence from the initial inquiry stage. If the Dean of Research (or delegate) determines that a Formal Inquiry will not proceed, they will notify the Research Degree Coordinator, research degree student and Principal Supervisor of this decision. A copy of the correspondence and the report will be sent to Student and Academic Services to be retained on the student record.
  - b. Where an external party, including an examiner or an academic from another university, has concerns that the action of a research degree student may involve research misconduct, the issue will proceed to a Formal Inquiry. Upon receipt of advice from an external party to the Registrar and Director: Student and Academic Services, Student and Academic Services will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies. A staff member or student who receives an allegation from an external party must notify the Registrar and Director: Student and Academic Services in the first instance.
18. When notified of an allegation of research misconduct, the Dean of Graduate Studies:
  - a. will seek preliminary investigation of the allegation by the Dean of Research (or delegate) to determine if a Formal Inquiry should proceed.
  - b. may, where the thesis is currently under examination, advise the research degree student that the examination process is halted pending an investigation, and may request that both examiners cease examination pending the investigation.
19. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will review the case and the evidence provided to determine whether the case should proceed to Formal Inquiry. The Dean of Research (or delegate) may request further information or material from the research degree student.
20. If the Dean of Research (or delegate) determines that a Formal Inquiry should not proceed, they will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies in writing and will include the basis for this decision. A copy of the correspondence and the report will be sent to Student and Academic Services to be retained on the student's record.
21. If the Dean of Research (or delegate) determines that a Formal Inquiry should proceed, they will notify, in writing, the research degree student and the Principal Supervisor within ten (10) working days. The notification will include details of the Formal Inquiry meeting, and a report providing details of the allegations and any documentary evidence. A copy of the correspondence and the report will be sent to Student and Academic Services to be retained on the student's record.

22. Where the case proceeds to a Formal Inquiry, the Dean of Research (or delegate) will establish the Formal Inquiry Panel (the Panel) consisting of:
  - a. the Dean of Research (or delegate) (Chair),
  - b. an academic staff representative from another Academic Unit than that enrolling the research degree student,
  - c. a nominee of the Registrar and Director, Student and Academic Services, and
  - d. a representative from [USASA](#).
23. In addition to the members of the Panel, up to two (2) other senior research staff members may be co-opted to the Panel.
24. Under no circumstances can the research degree student's supervisor(s) (current or past) or any member of the Student Appeals Committee serve as a member of the Panel.
25. The Panel may invite the staff member, research degree student, or external party, where relevant, who originally raised the allegation of research misconduct to provide evidence to the Formal Inquiry, but they may not serve as a member of the Panel.
26. As specified in clause D.17 or D.21, the Chair will write to the research degree student providing details of the alleged misconduct and invite the research degree student to attend (in person or via agreed technology) to present their case to the Panel regarding the allegation. The letter to the research degree student must include:
  - a. a copy of this procedure, and
  - b. copies of all information and documents to be considered at the Formal Inquiry.
27. The Formal Inquiry must occur at least five (5) working days after, and normally within 20 working days after, the date recorded on the letter sent to the research degree student, detailed in clause D.21.
28. The research degree student may be assisted or represented at the Formal Inquiry by a [USASA](#) representative, or any staff member or student of the University. This person is not a member of the Panel.
29. The Formal Inquiry may proceed:
  - a. whether or not the research degree student responds or attends, and
  - b. even if all members are not in attendance, provided there is a quorum of three (3) which must include the Chair.
30. Where the Formal Inquiry concludes that the action of the research degree student does not constitute research misconduct no further action will be taken. If necessary, the research degree student may be permitted to undertake further research and re-submit the work.
31. Where the Formal Inquiry concludes that the action of the research degree student was research misconduct, the Panel will determine an appropriate outcome. Formal Inquiry outcomes may include:
  - a. failure in the course (if part of a Professional Doctorate); or
  - b. suspension from the University for a period not exceeding three (3) years; or
  - c. another appropriate outcome with an impact less serious than termination of enrolment; or
  - d. termination of enrolment.

32. The Dean of Research (or delegate) will notify the following people in writing within 10 working days of the Formal Inquiry of the decision, and the basis for that decision:
  - a. the research degree student;
  - b. the supervisors;
  - c. the Research Degree Coordinator;
  - d. the Dean of Graduate Studies;
  - e. Student and Academic Services, to be retained on the student record;
  - f. the Manager: Research Integrity.
33. Where the Panel has determined that the action of the research degree student was research misconduct, the letter must be sent via Registered Post, and include:
  - a. a copy of this regulation;
  - b. the research degree student's right to appeal the decision of the Panel to the Dean of Graduate Studies (refer to Procedure AB-58 P8: [Research Degrees Appeals and Grievances](#)).
34. The Dean of Graduate Studies may report any adverse or non-adverse findings of research misconduct to any such entities and persons if the Dean of Graduate Studies determines that it is necessary to do so.
35. For international student visa holders, the University need only await the outcome of a final internal (i.e. within the University) appeal which supports the University's decision before cancelling the research degree student's Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE), unless exceptional circumstances relating to the welfare of the research degree student apply.
36. All correspondence relating to the Formal Inquiry and its outcome is to be forwarded to Student and Academic Services and retained on the student record.

#### **E. Recording outcomes of research misconduct and breaches of examination procedures**

37. The University will store data about research misconduct and breaches of examination procedures in the research degree student record.
38. In the case of initial inquiry where it is determined that no research misconduct occurred, no data will be stored on the student record.
39. In the case where no examination procedures have been breached, no data will be stored on the student record.
40. All Deans of Research (or delegates) and the Dean of Graduate Studies will have access to any data stored in a research degree student record.
41. Where a research degree student has breached an examination procedure, and the breach does not constitute research misconduct, a record of the case will be forwarded to Student and Academic Services to be recorded on the student record. The record will consist of:
  - a. details of the research degree student, the program and the examination;
  - b. the type of breach;
  - c. the counselling provided to the research degree student.

42. Where it is determined that research misconduct occurred, a record of the case will be forwarded to Student and Academic Services to be recorded on the student's record. The record will consist of:
  - a. details of the research degree student, the program and the research work;
  - b. the type of research misconduct;
  - c. the factors taken into consideration;
  - d. the evidence or other material on which the findings were based;
  - e. the outcome and the reasons for its determination;
  - f. the research degree student's agreement to the specified outcome.
43. Where, as a result of an initial inquiry, the Research Degree Coordinator concludes that the evidence in the case is sufficient to proceed they will ensure that a record is retained on the student record to indicate whether the case was referred to a Formal Inquiry Panel, or the research degree student was allowed to re-submit work, and the factors taken into consideration in making that decision.
44. Where a Formal Inquiry Panel (Panel) is constituted, the Panel, through the Chair, will have access to the data stored regarding the initial inquiry relating to that case, and to any other cases recorded against that research degree student, in order to assist in their determination. The Panel will add a record of their determination to the student record, including:
  - a. the factors taken into consideration in determining an outcome;
  - b. the evidence or other material on which the findings were based;
  - c. the outcome and the reasons for its determination.
45. Where a research degree student appeals the outcome of a Formal Inquiry, in accordance with Procedure AB-58 P8: [Research Degrees Appeals and Grievances](#), the Student Appeals Committee, through the Chair, will have access to the data stored regarding the initial inquiry and Formal Inquiry relating to that case, and to any other cases recorded against that research degree student, in order to assist in the determination.

## Definitions

**Academic Unit** is a major organisational unit with responsibility for academic programs. At UniSA, there are seven Academic Units: UniSA: Allied Health & Human Performance; UniSA: Business; UniSA: Clinical & Health Sciences; UniSA: Creative; UniSA: Education Futures; UniSA: Justice & Society; and UniSA: STEM.

**Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE)** refers to the document issued to international students studying in Australia on a student visa, for the maintenance of student visa conditions.

**Dean of Research** is the research leadership role in each Academic Unit who enacts the University's research strategy and is responsible for the oversight of research degree programs in their Academic Unit. The Dean of Research may delegate the leadership and management of research education and related activities to a Professorial Lead with portfolio responsibility for the research degrees in the Academic Unit.

**Enrolment** is the process by which persons who have been admitted to a University program are formally registered to undertake one or more courses within their program as either commencing or continuing students.

**Enterprise Agreement/Collective Agreement** is the University of South Australia Enterprise Agreement 2019 and the University of South Australia Senior Staff Collective Agreement 2006 (as varied or replaced from time to time).

**Examiner** is an academic from another University or research organisation, appointed to assess and evaluate a research degree thesis, Oral Defence and any accompanying creative or published work on the basis of criteria specified by the University.

**Principal Supervisor** is a university academic staff member or adjunct who has primary responsibility for guiding the postgraduate research undertaken by a designated research degree student and for overseeing the progress of that student towards completion of their research degree. The Principal Supervisor is normally responsible for decisions and processes as detailed in relevant procedures, including convening the Supervisory Panel for reviews of research degree student progress, and consultation on the research project.

**Research Degree Coordinator** is a member of academic staff, appointed by the Dean of Research in an Academic Unit, who has responsibility for pastoral care of research degree students. The Research Degree Coordinator convenes Confirmation and Reviews of Progress, and acts in accordance with Policy AB-58 Research Degrees and associated procedures.

**Research Degree Examinations and Quality Panel** is the panel convened by the University's Research Degrees Committee to assess and determine complex academic matters with regard to research degree students.

**Research degree student** is an individual enrolled in a research degree.

**Supervisors** are members of the University Community who have oversight and/or direction of the work of staff or students.

**Suspension** may occur if the research degree student has not completed the requirements for the degree. Enrolment lapses prior to the completion process due to the student failing to make satisfactory progress. Within three (3) years, the student may seek reinstatement and be re-admitted if appropriate support is available.

**Termination** may be determined as an outcome of a Formal Inquiry into alleged research misconduct. No reinstatement is permitted.

**Thesis** is a body of research work that is submitted by research degree students for examination. Research work means any combination of a thesis, dissertation, portfolio of work, exegesis, creative work, published articles or written project in accordance with the relevant research degree requirements.

**University Community** refers to all students and staff members of the University including honorary title holders, adjuncts, visiting academics, guest lecturers and volunteers who are contributing to the work of the University but who are not staff members.

#### **Further Assistance:**

[Student and Academic Services](#)

**Related Documentation:**

Policy AB-58: [Research Degrees](#)

Policy AB-64: [Supervision of Research Degree Students](#)

Policy AB-66: [Research Integrity](#)

Policy RES-12.2: [Authorship](#)

Procedure AB-58 P8: [Research Degrees Appeals and Grievances](#)

Appendix AB-58 AD3: [Research Misconduct](#)

[Section 9 - Disciplinary Procedures of the University of South Australia Enterprise Agreement 2019](#)

[Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

[AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research](#)

[National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)

[Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes](#)

**Officer Responsible for Update and Review:** Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research and Enterprise

**Approved by:** Academic Board

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**History:** The clauses in this procedure were previously referenced as clauses 14.1 to 14.3 and Appendix B of the Academic Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research.