

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS – THESIS BY CREATIVE & EXEGESIS PROJECT DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD) and MASTERS BY RESEARCH (MRES) (Creative Writing, Multimedia, Performance, Visual Arts)

INTRODUCTION

Victoria University has offered creative arts research degrees at MRes and PhD level for more than ten years. The University has consistently maintained rigorous standards of scholarship and performance in the supervision, design and delivery of supervised postgraduate thesis in these areas.

The following guidelines have been developed to accompany the University's general guidelines for examiners in order to clarify the expectations and processes for examiners of creative arts research degrees at the doctoral level, leading to the award of PhD and, at the MRes level, leading to the award of MRes.

Victoria University recognises that research in the creative arts involves both the creative practice of producing new and original works in the candidate's chosen medium/media, and also engaging in critical reflection, examination and analysis of both their own processes of creative production in the chosen field and the wider social, cultural, theoretical and conceptual contexts in which this occurs.

As in all types of academic research, research in the creative arts is original, speculative and systematically pursues new knowledge. Victoria University recognises however, that while the outcomes of research in the creative arts can mirror the range of outcomes found in many different academic disciplines, it is the presentation of those outcomes that differentiates research in the creative arts from other disciplines.

MRes/PhD BY CREATIVE PROJECT AND EXEGESIS THESIS FORMAT (or written analytical component)

A thesis format by Creative Project submission is presented as three interrelated elements:

1. **A Thesis Abstract** (max of 2 written pages) that outlines that nature, scope and intent of the creative project. The abstract must provide a brief description that locates the Creative and Analytical Written Components within their relevant fields of theory and practice. It must also outline the proportionate balance between the respective Creative and Analytical Written Components, and their preferred 'reading/viewing' order.
2. **Creative Project.** Either a written project of whichever genre or, where by exhibition or performance, to be presented in a format that provides a durable record of the creative work undertaken for the creative project.
3. **Exegesis (or written analytical component).** The Exegesis provides a critical analysis or reflection on the creative project and its outcomes, and situates that work within relevant literature, ideas and debate.

The MRes (By Creative Project and Exegesis Thesis Format) should contribute to knowledge by a) the production of a Creative By Creative Project and Exegesis and b) through the scholarly exegesis which situates that project. The MRes as a whole should demonstrate the development of new approaches or the innovative re-interpretation of existing ideas, theories or approaches.

The research at examination should demonstrate:

- A thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research (both creative and scholarly) by both a thorough review of the literature and by application;
- Competence in the chosen field through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work.

The PhD (By Creative Project and Exegesis Thesis Format) should uncover or create new knowledge by a) the production of a creative Component and b) through the scholarly exegesis which situates that project. The PhD as a whole should demonstrate the discovery of new information, development of new approaches or the innovative re-interpretation of existing ideas, theories or approaches.

The research at examination should demonstrate:

- A deep and thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research (both creative and scholarly) by both a thorough review of the literature and by application;
- Competence in the chosen field through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work;
- Independence of thought and approach;
- An original contribution to knowledge.

The form of the creative works and the balance between the Creative and Exegetical Components is negotiated at the outset of the candidature between the supervisor and the candidate and approved by the College. However, the Exegesis for the Doctor of Philosophy must comprise no less than 30% (18,000 – 30,000) of the total work presented and for the MRes must comprise no less than 30% (12,000 – 20,000).

The Creative Component

The Creative Component is a fully conceptualised and stylistically developed creative work of international publishable/performable standard. It must:

- Be presented in the student's chosen medium/media – such as creative writing, performance or exhibition;
- Where for exhibition or performance, it must be presented in a format which provides a durable record of the work undertaken for the Creative Component;
- Represent no more than 70% and no less than 50% of the total work submitted for examination;
- Demonstrate understanding of the creative discipline;
- Provide evidence of the skills required to produce a coherent and professional standard piece of work;
- Present a creative undertaking which is in dynamic relation to the theoretical and scholarly ideas explicitly developed within the Exegesis;
- Be of publishable standard/merits public display or presentation.

The Exegesis

The Exegesis is a theorised and analytical discourse which presents new and authoritative contributions to knowledge within the discipline by discussing and situating the Creative Component, thereby providing the broad context for the ideas and precedents which inform the development of the MRes/PhD (**By Creative Project and Exegesis Thesis Format**).

- The Exegesis elucidates the purpose and effect of the creative product, reflects and comments critically upon its processes of production, and places it into a broader disciplinary and research context. It might also demonstrate the positioning of the creative artist as a researcher and not merely as a practitioner.
- While more flexible in its form than a conventional thesis, an Exegesis should still produce a Research Question which serves the function of providing a conceptual overview of the discussion, situating the creative work within relevant fields of knowledge and debate.
- As scholarly discussion which functions to situate the Creative Component, the Exegesis
 - Might be produced in a standard academic style;
 - Might develop a hybrid discourse of analytical/creative research method and expression;
 - Might utilise a practice-led research methodology

The MRes/PhD (**By Creative Project and Exegesis Thesis Format**) is to be examined on the basis of the combination of the Creative Component and the complementary Exegesis.. The components are not to be examined separately, but as an integrated and interrelated whole constituting the original and substantial contribution to knowledge required of research candidates at both the Doctoral and Masters by Research level.

EXAMINATION OF MRes/PhD (by Creative Project and Exegesis Thesis Format)

Examiners will be advised of the form of the examinable work at the time of their employment by the University.

Submission of the MRes/PhD (Creative Thesis Format)

Where both the Exegesis and the Creative Component are written (see below) they should be considered as a single submission. This may be in the form of 2 separately bound documents or in 1 combined submission with distinct elements. Where there are two documents, the Abstract and any additional preparatory material ought to be included at the beginning of the Creative Component. Where the Creative Component is an Exhibition or a Performance, separate arrangements for Examiners are to be made as per below.

Creative Component (Written)

Where the Creative Component is comprised of writing (in whatever genre), it is to be included with the Exegesis as a single submission.

Creative Component (Exhibition or Performance)

For creative projects that require examiner attendance at an exhibition or performance, these additional guidelines are to be followed:

- Examiners will be advised of the requirement to attend a live performance or exhibition at the time of their appointment.
- One (1) reserve examiner is appointed in the event that one of the two original examiners is for some reason unable to attend the exhibition or performance or to complete other aspects of the examination process.
- All examiners will be provided with the Thesis Abstract no less than 14 days prior to their scheduled attendance at the live performance or exhibition. In addition, if the candidate has opted for the analytical Written Component to be read prior to the viewing of the performance or exhibition, then this must also be provided no less than 14 days prior to the scheduled live performance or exhibition.
- All examiners including the reserve examiner are expected to attend the exhibition or performance of the candidate's creative work as a component of the thesis.
- The third examiner will be designated the Reserve Examiner whose report is required, but will only be called upon in the event that:
 1. A primary examiner is unable to attend a performance and the College has been unable to contact another examiner; or
 2. A primary examiner has been able to attend the performance but unable to write a report on the performance project, or
 3. A primary examiner is late in providing a report on the performance project.
- The candidate receives only the examination reports of the first 2 examiners (or one plus the reserve if one of the original two has been replaced).
- After the performance or exhibition, if not previously submitted, the Examiners will receive the full 'Thesis by Creative Project' submission as outlined about. Receipt of the full submission must occur not more than 4 months from the attendance at the live performance or exhibition.
- The Examiners will write independent reports on the creative project, including a short description of the Creative Component and its execution, and provide these with their grades according to the University states within two months of receiving the final 'Thesis by Creative Project' submission.
- The Examiners shall not communicate with each other or the candidate about the performance or exhibition until their independent examination reports have been submitted.

GRADING OF THESES

The University uses five categories for examiners' recommendations (See [Table 1](#)). Examiners are asked to select one category on the form supplied, and to attach a detailed report, elaborating on the selected category, to be seen by the candidate, supervisor, and Chair of Examiners.

Where a recommendation is made conditional on changes, amendments or requests for elaboration, it is important for the candidate that the specific nature of the changes, amendments, or elaboration be made as clearly as possible in the report.

It would be of assistance to the University if the recommendation and report could include specific comments on the following:

- To what extent and how the MRes/PhD (**By Creative Project and Exegesis Thesis Format**):
 - makes a contribution to the knowledge of the subject with which it deals, and
 - shows that the candidate understands the relationship of the investigation to the wider context of the knowledge in which it belongs.
- The quality of the Creative Component and its ability to contribute aesthetically and conceptually to debates and praxis within its field;
- The efficacy of the Exegesis to reflect upon and situate the Creative Component;
- The ability of the candidate to survey the relevant literature and to document statements adequately;
- The extent to which the candidate's attitude to their own work and to the work of others is critical and perceptive;
- Whether the literary/written presentation of the thesis is satisfactory:
 - Any changes which should be made to the thesis before the degree is awarded.

CATEGORIES FOR EXAMINERS' RECOMMENDATION

Table 1 - Categories for Examiners' Recommendation

<i>PASSED without further correction</i>	This indicates that the thesis is an excellent piece of work, which may be passed unconditionally. (Note: An examiner may note minor areas that would benefit from further editing.)
<i>PASSED subject to minor corrections</i>	<p><i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i></p> <p>This category is used when the examiner considers there to be some relatively minor flaws that need attention but do not detract from the overall quality of the work. This may characteristically entail additional proofing, textual amendments or corrections. The examiner's report indicates the specific corrections required. Examiners do not see the thesis again.</p>
<i>PASSED subject to substantial amendment</i>	<p><i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i></p> <p>This category is used when it is considered that there are one or more areas that require amendment, but that with these amendments the work has sufficient integrity to pass. Characteristically, the amendment(s) will relate to clearly definable sections or elements, which are detailed in the examiner's report. Examiners do not see the thesis again.</p>
<i>DEFERRED</i>	<p><i>The candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/work in a revised form</i></p> <p>This category is used where the examiner believes that there is need for a significant revision without which the thesis/work cannot be passed. A deferred result implies that the thesis /work is well-grounded and, with additional work, as indicated, can pass. The specific revisions recommended are detailed in the examiner's report.</p> <p>A thesis/work with a deferred result may be returned to the examiner for re-examination. A re-examined thesis can only be graded as PASS or FAIL.</p>
<i>FAILED</i>	This result is recommended with the thesis/work is so fundamentally flawed in conception, methodology, methods, and/or overall conduct that even major revisions would not redeem it.

THESIS QUALITY - DOCTORAL

In addition to providing their examiners' report, examiners are also asked when examining a doctoral thesis, to assess the quality of the thesis and generic attributes.

THESIS QUALITY – MASTERS BY RESEARCH

In addition to providing their examiners' report, examiners are also asked when examining a Masters by Research, to provide a numerical score and honours level assessment (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Honours Level Assessment

Result code	Meaning	Grade Result
H1	First class honours	80 -100 %
H2A	Second class honours, upper	70-79%
H2B	Second class honours, higher	60-69%
H3	Third class honours	50-59%
N	Fail	0-49%

CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Graduate Research School. If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the Graduate Research School will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners.

Graduate Research School
researchexaminations@vu.edu.au