

Swinburne University of Technology

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINATION OF A PHD

Swinburne PhDs

At Swinburne University of Technology, a range of options are available within the scope of a PhD. These include:

- PhD by Thesis
- PhD by Artefact and Exegesis; PhD by Artefact and Project Document
- PhD by Publication

Note that other doctoral options exist in the form of professional doctorates. Guidelines for the examination of professional doctorates are not covered in this document. If you are examining a professional doctorate, contact Swinburne Research for the appropriate guidelines.

Definitions

- **PhD by Thesis**

For the purposes of this document, a PhD by thesis is one that comprises of a 70 000 to 100 000 word document.

A thesis (or dissertation) with respect to a research degree is normally defined as a proposition that is maintained by argument. The argument should be orderly, logical and systematic; and linear and proceed through inference where one part of the argument leads to the next and so on.

- **PhD by Artefact and Exegesis or Project Document**

The examinable outcome of a PhD by artefact and exegesis consists of two parts: The artefact can be a publicly available creative work (for example a body of artistic work, a film, a novel, or other literary form), a commissioned report, an invention or other product, and may be presented through for example, performance, exhibition, a publishable written document, and may be on CD- ROM or other multimedia technology.

The exegesis is a written document of between 20 000 to 30 000 words, which documents the provenance (history and context) of the work, and the praxis (theory and process) which provides insights into the work which a reading or viewing of the work cannot provide.

In the Design disciplines, the artefact is likely to be a design object and the second examinable outcome is termed a project document; hence, PhD by artefact and project document.

- **PhD by Publication**

Submitted works, or the examinable outcome, for PhD by publication consist of: (1) a collection of published works and (2) an integrative essay. Each is discussed in turn.

(1) A Collection of Published Works

The published works must be appropriate to the discipline at the time of publication and may include written texts such as books, articles in journals, conference papers and substantial commissioned research reports. They can also include work that does not take the form of a written text, such as productions, exhibitions or designs appropriate to the candidate's discipline or medium presented as a durable visual record. Whatever form the published works take, it is necessary that they should, at the very least, have been accessible within the public domain and undergone a refereed or substantive peer review process.

(2) An Integrative Essay

The integrative essay, of at least 20 000 words, should address the standard of the works and must reflect upon where the work fits into the body of knowledge in the discipline and how the body of work is linked within the candidate's professional development.

The PhD (by publication) degree is normally undertaken over the equivalent of twelve months candidature, which is spent primarily in preparation of the collection of published works and integrative essay. The published works may include works of co- or joint authorship. Where works are co-authored, statements are required from co-authors attesting to the candidates' contribution to the published work. The PhD is recognition of successful research experience at the standard used internationally in that research. The integrative essay should demonstrate evidence of the candidate's ability to conduct research independently at the highest level of originality and quality. Throughout the submitted works, candidates are required to demonstrate achievement at the level expected of doctoral candidates.

The PhD Degree

PhD candidates are required to submit a written research thesis or an artefact with an accompanying exegesis or project document. The works overall should be equivalent to 70 000 to 100 000 words.

A doctorate is a work of sustained scholarship that makes a significant and original contribution to a discipline or profession. Significance is judged in terms of the potential of the results of the work to be published in peer-reviewed form (or in some cases of its capacity to advance professional practice).

The scholarly work, or 'examinable outcome', is documented in:

- (a) a thesis or
- (b) an artefact with accompanying exegesis or project document that explicates the creative process and indicates its significance to a practice community.

PhD Standard for Examination

The degree of PhD indicates that the holder of the degree has undertaken a substantial piece of significant and original research conducted and reported under academic supervision for a period of usually 3 to 4 years full time equivalent.

In order to pass the examination processes and to, therefore, qualify for the PhD award, the examinable outcome should:

- make an original contribution to knowledge in terms of the originality of the approach and/or findings;
- constitute a coherent and cogent argument that communicates the significant elements of the research in a professional context as well as within a national and/or an international context;
- demonstrate authority of the candidate within the given field(s) and indicate knowledge of related fields;
- show a firm grasp of the methodological aspects of the research, from overall approach to explicit techniques;
- demonstrate a high level of language use that is both professional and academic, as well as being free of typographical and grammatical errors;
- provide, where relevant, a high level of reproductive quality with respect to illustrative, graphic and other non-print text material;
- be a rigorous, sustained, logical and considered piece of work demonstrating that the candidate is ready to be admitted to the community of scholars within the discipline(s).

The Examination Process at Swinburne University

Normally a minimum of two external examiners are invited by the Research Higher Degree Committee to examine the submitted works for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Examiners are asked to make a recommendation to the Swinburne Research Higher Degree Committee and classify the work. If the examiners' recommendations disagree significantly, the work will be sent to a third examiner. If an examiner is unable to complete the examination within a time frame satisfactory to the Swinburne Research Higher Degree Committee (normally a maximum of 6 weeks), the examiner should contact Swinburne Research to clarify the situation. If necessary, another examiner may be appointed in his/her place.

Confidentiality

Examination of a PhD is a confidential process. The examinable outcome is a confidential text. Examiners must not divulge any (unpublished) content before, during or after the examination without the consent of the author.

Oral Examination

On occasion, an oral examination may be deemed appropriate. In such cases, after reading the examinable outcome, and prior to making their recommendations, the examiners engage in a face-to-face discussion (real or virtual) with the candidate with the purpose of obtaining responses to questions raised by their reading of the work.

An oral examination should be conducted according to the following guidelines:

All oral examinations must be conducted with an appointed Chair from the examination panel.

The Chair is responsible for ensuring that:

- a) the examination is conducted in accordance with the *Swinburne Research and Higher Degrees Policy*
- b) examiners are briefed by the Chair about the appropriate conduct of the examination;
- c) examiners are fully aware of the nature and level of the relevant research degree as required by Swinburne University;
- d) dialogue between examiners and candidate is at the appropriate professional level;
- e) a consensus is obtained among the examiners about the recommended examination outcome, or failing a consensus, that a clear majority recommendation is agreed upon;
- f) a written report, signed by each panel member, detailing the panel's recommendation is provided to Swinburne Research within 24 hours of the examination.

The Chair may recommend a re-examination to the SRHDC if the examination deviated from requirements above. This may include a recommendation that a new panel of examiners be appointed.

Attendance of Examiners at the Presentation

The examiners shall attend the presentation (actually or virtually) and shall each receive for examination a copy of the appropriate durable record and relevant documentation.

Additional Documents:

Letter to Examiner
A Copy of the Examinable Outcome
Report Form
Payment Forms

Examination Formalities:

1. All matters pertaining to the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy, Professional Doctorates and Masters by Research fall under the responsibility of the Research Higher Degree Committee under the general direction of the University's Academic Board.
2. The Research Higher Degree Committee wishes to receive clear advice on specific aspects of the examinable outcome and, to this end, the examiner is asked to place a tick by the statements deemed appropriate in the enclosed report form. Examiners are requested to provide a separate, written report to substantiate their thesis or examinable outcome evaluation.
3. Recommendation 2(ii) should be made only when the examiner can specify amendments so precisely that the Supervisor's decision is essentially a simple matter of fact.
4. To satisfy the requirements of the degree, the examinable outcome must be a major advancement in professional practice and/or theory and must demonstrate the capacity of the candidate to carry out independent research.
5. An examiner may request the University to obtain from the candidate clarification of specific points in the thesis or examinable outcome. Such requests should be made through the Secretary, Higher Degrees Committee, Swinburne Research.
6. The examinable outcome is forwarded to an examiner in confidence. An examiner is under an obligation to maintain confidentiality and in no circumstances should he/she discuss the thesis or examinable outcome or any part of the examination process, with a third party without the prior approval of the Swinburne Research. In accordance with the stipulation of our policy, all communication with examiners concerning the examination of a thesis or examinable outcome while that thesis or examinable outcome is under examination should be made formally through the Secretary. No member of the University, and in particular no Supervisor or Candidate, should discuss an examinable outcome under examination with any examiner. However, examiners may communicate with one another regarding the thesis or examinable outcome.
7. In cases where examiners deem it necessary to annotate an examinable outcome, it should be done in pencil. In the case of international examinations, where amendments are to be made with reference to the annotations, the annotated pages should be faxed to the Director, Graduate Studies, when the report is returned by email. The examinable outcome can then be returned by surface mail.