

School of Graduate Research

Supplementary guidelines

This document outlines the supplementary guidelines for examiners of practice research PhDs and Masters by Research in the College of Design and Social Context.

This document must be read in conjunction with the *RMIT guidelines for examiners - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)/ Masters by Research*.

Section 1. Practice Research Programs

RMIT University offers practice research PhDs and Masters by Research through practice-led and practice-based approaches. Practice Research PhD and Masters candidates are practitioners from a range of creative fields at various stages of their careers, many of whom have already developed a substantial and distinctive body of work. The research undertaken by candidates may be through reflective, generative, or applied modes of practice research, or hybrids of these.

Established practitioners produce new knowledge from their existing practices by reflecting upon the nature of their practice, they articulate propositions from that practice in critical comparison to others within their disciplines and their communities of practice, and they communicate the impact of these propositions on knowledge and future practice in their fields.

Practitioners undertaking the generative development of a new body of creative work during their research candidature will articulate their approach, focus on the value of the work, and critically situate their discoveries in relationship to the discourses and communities of practice to which they make a contribution.

Practitioners engaging via an applied approach generally work toward new ways of enabling creative practices. This often involves working with a larger team on a defined research project, leading to the development of new techniques, technologies, and capabilities that will benefit professional practices beyond that specific project.

The process of enquiry that develops through candidates' research is underpinned by making presentations at twice-yearly Practice Research Symposium (PRS) events held in each of three regions: Australia, Europe & Asia. This ecology opens up candidates' research to regular interrogation and explication through group discussion with peers, supervisors, and respected national and international colleagues. A video archive of past PhD and Masters examination presentations can be viewed at the Practice Research Portal.

Section 2. Examination elements

A practice research PhD or Masters degree is examined via the combination of unweighted, integrated elements that form the whole project being examined:

- a body of creative practice work presented in a public exhibit, exposition or performance event (or its recorded equivalent, in the case of online examinations);
- a dissertation which captures the creative practice work, situates the research in relation to relevant literature and practice precedents, explicates and defends the research approach, and outlines the original contribution to knowledge or practice, that is usually of 30,000-55,000 words for a PhD and 15,000–20,000 for a Masters by Research (these ranges do not include the abstract, appendices or references);
- a live oral presentation and discussion with two examiners, either in-person or online, facilitated by a chairperson, with a public audience, and (when held in-person) in the context of the public exhibit.

All elements combined constitute the content and communication of the research being examined and are documented to form an archival record of the research.

Section 3 Criteria for examination and consideration of the award

The RMIT School of Graduate Research's Guidelines for Examiners summarise the Australian Qualifications Framework criteria for the award of PhD and Masters by Research degrees across all disciplines and modes of research.

Practice research PhDs and Masters by Research are examined according to the 'by project' mode described in those Guidelines.

Masters by Research candidates who commenced their enrolment from January 2016 will also receive a grade for their submission. Examiners of Masters by Research candidates should refer to grading standards in the supplied Guidelines for Examiners.

Examiners are selected for their expertise in articulating international standards of practice research within their field and in evaluating practice research against these at levels commensurate with the award of PhD or Masters by Research.

Examiners of practice research PhDs and Masters by Research should give particular emphasis to assessing whether a candidate's work demonstrates:

- a new contribution to practice knowledge;
- a critical evaluation of how the candidate's practice research is situated in relation to an existing field of practice; and
- how the research contributes to and extends that field of practice.

Section 4. Examination Process

1. The dissertation is made available to examiners four weeks prior to the examination event.
2. A briefing for the examination panel, comprised of two examiners and an independent chairperson, commences 30–60 minutes prior to the examination event.
3. A live or pre-recorded oral presentation is made by the candidate to the examination panel. This may be up to one hour in duration for PhD examinations and up to 30 minutes in duration for Masters by Research. Where the practice is intrinsically unsuited to exhibition, the primary supervisor and candidate may negotiate an additional event or performance to take place prior to the oral presentation, subject to approval by the HDR Delegated Authority of the School in which the candidate is enrolled.
4. Examiners are invited to discuss the research with the candidate, asking questions and offering critical appraisal of all elements of the research immediately after the presentation. This question and discussion time may be up to one hour in duration for PhD examinations and up to 30 minutes in duration for Masters by Research. Examiners are requested to undertake the discussion in a manner that elicits an understanding of the research to maximize their capacity to make an informed and independent evaluation of the research under examination. The in-person or online examination event comprising the candidate's oral presentation and the discussion between candidate and examiners may have approximately 20–100 audience members attending and is recorded to form part of the archival record of the research. Examiners are requested to give their permission for audio-visual recordings and images of the examination event to be published online.
5. A private examination panel discussion is convened by the chairperson immediately after the examination for the purpose of providing clarifications that support each examiner making an independent evaluation and recommendation on the merit of the research toward achieving the award of the degree of PhD or Masters by Research. The Chair of the panel is unable to comment on the content of the research and is responsible for ensuring that each examiner is uncompromised in their ability to make an independent evaluation of the research. Examiners are asked to refrain from expressing evaluative judgments that may influence one another. Examiners are not required to make a final recommendation on the day of examination.
6. Examiners' reports are to be submitted no later than two weeks after the date of the examination event. The written report is to substantiate the recommendation made, and is to consider the research as a whole, comprised of the three unweighted elements which together constitute the content and communication of the research under examination.