

The purpose of this document is to:

- a) outline the modes of submission available to candidates at RMIT,
- b) explain the criteria to be used when assessing the doctoral work and the recommendations available to you as an examiner; and
- c) provide guidance about the structure of your report.

Please complete your examination within six weeks of receiving this document.

Section 1. Criteria for each mode of submission

At RMIT, the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a degree with a duration of between three and four years full-time (or part-time equivalent), of which at least two thirds are devoted to research. Candidates complete either a thesis or a project. Submitted work for examination may include publications or other publicly presented research outputs. Candidates who include published material in their submitted work complete a research output declaration form as part of their submission. The length and format of the thesis/dissertation should be consistent with the normal standards for the discipline/field.

Thesis

The thesis must be unified and coherent in content addressing a single, significant research question/theme.

Project

The project must also address a single, significant research question/theme, comprising the components below, and examiners should treat these components as integral parts of the whole project being examined.

The project will contain:

- i. the artefact(s) and /or body of work presented in an exhibition or performance (visual or sonic); or a visual/sonic record of the artefact(s) or body of work; and,
- ii. a dissertation which defines the purpose and theoretical basis of the work.

An oral presentation made by the candidate, may be agreed to by the candidate and their supervisors in certain disciplines. Supplementary information on project mode examination may be available for specific disciplines.

Section 2. Criteria for examination and consideration of the award

Regardless of mode of submission, in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework ¹, for the award of a doctoral degree the candidate must demonstrate:

- i. a substantial, original and significant contribution to the knowledge or understanding in the field of study;
- ii. an expert understanding of theoretical knowledge and the ability to reflect critically on that theory and practice;
- iii. intellectual independence in evaluating existing knowledge and ideas, and planning and undertaking systematic investigation to generate original knowledge;
- iv. technical and creative skills, including use of relevant research principles and methods, applicable to the field of study or learning;
- v. communication skills to explain and critique their field of research, including the ability to present a sustained argument;
- vi. an ethical approach and a high level of research integrity.

Section 3. Initial Classification

An examiner of a revised thesis/project has received the work because the Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Training & Development (ADVCR, RT&D) or a College Higher Degrees Examination Advisory Committee has classified it as *C3 Revise and Resubmit*, on the basis of the examination reports from the initial examination.

This classification means that the candidate's research is not yet of a sufficient standard for the award of the degree but as having the potential to be of this standard. After further research, rewriting, re-organisation, and/or re-conceptualisation as specified by the examiner the candidate resubmits the revised work so they can be re-examined and receive a final classification.

¹ Australian Quality Framework qualifications http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/14AQF_Doctoral-Degree.pdf

Section 4. Appointment of a new examiner

Occasionally a previous examiner is not available for a re-examination or has chosen not to be involved in any further examination. One or more new examiners are then appointed for the purpose of a re-examination. In addition to receiving a copy of the revised thesis/project, new examiners are also provided the candidate's response to the first examiners' examination reports that details the requirements set by those examiners.

Section 5. Examiner's recommendation

After examining the revised thesis/project, an examiner shall make one of the following recommendations:

Examiner's Recommendation	Definition
Passed (R1):	The candidate should be awarded the degree with no requirements for amendments other than corrections of an editorial nature. Amendments, if any, to be made within four weeks of classification.
Failed (R4):	The candidate should not be awarded the degree. The research does not meet the criteria for the degree as specified by the University.

Section 6. Examiner's report

In assessing the research, please prepare a report using the *Re-Examination: examiners' report form - Doctor of Philosophy*, indicating whether the criteria in (i) – (vi) above have been satisfied.

Please provide the grounds for your recommendation by detailing, as fully as possible, the strengths and weaknesses of the research. This feedback will be used by RMIT to advise the candidate.

If you make a recommendation of R4 please keep in mind that candidates may appeal against a final examination classification at RMIT and your examination report should provide clear evidence of the failure of the candidate to meet the required standards of the degree.

Section 7. Integrity of the examination process

During the examination process, there should not be any direct contact between an examiner and the candidate or supervisors. Only the ADVC, RT&D (or nominee) may communicate with an examiner, and the thesis/project should be treated as a confidential document.

Where an oral presentation or exhibition forms part of the examination, examiners may meet each other and the candidate. This is to enable examiners to experience the examinable work in an appropriate format. No assessment of the work, or opinion about the work's assessment, may be expressed or discussed in this context.

All examiners are required to submit independent reports and should not consult other examiners in making their assessment other than in exceptional circumstances, either following the approval of, or at the request of, the ADVC, RT&D. For examinations conducted by written review only, examiners' names will only be revealed to the candidate after the examination has concluded, if the examiner has given their approval.

Section 8. Classification of thesis/project

The examiners shall individually and independently assess the thesis/project, prepare a brief assessment report for the guidance of the candidate and make a recommendation to the ADVC, RT&D, RMIT.

The ADVC, RT&D will use the Examination classification schedule to determine the examination outcome, based on the examiners' recommendations from the re-examination.

Section 9. Process

In order to be awarded the degree, any amendments or revisions made by the candidate must be approved by the Senior/Joint senior supervisor/s and Dean/Head of School or their delegate.