

## **GUIDELINES FOR POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAMS (other than Professional Doctorates)**

These Guidelines provide the basis for structuring postgraduate coursework courses (other than professional doctorates). New courses or course review proposals, which recommend a structure which does not comply with the Guidelines, need to provide specific justification in that regard.

### **1. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

#### **1.1 Minimum entry requirements**

The minimum entry requirements for postgraduate coursework programs will be as follows:

- (a) *Graduate Certificate/Postgraduate Certificate*<sup>7</sup>
  - (i) A three year Bachelor degree;
- (b) *Graduate Diploma/Postgraduate Diploma*<sup>1</sup>
  - (i) A three year Bachelor degree; or
  - (ii) A Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate in the discipline;
- (c) *Master by Coursework*
  - (i) A four year Bachelor degree (or equivalent); or
  - (ii) A three year Bachelor degree in a related discipline.

#### **1.2 Special entry**

Special or non-graduate entry into postgraduate programs is accepted only where there are clear criteria or conditions for entry. Unless a strong case for exceptional circumstances can be made, non-graduate entry would normally be at the Graduate Certificate level.

Students who do not qualify for direct entry to a Master's program may progress step-wise through a suite of postgraduate programs, eg Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate, Graduate/Postgraduate Diploma courses.

#### **1.3 Non-discipline based entry**

Normal entrance for Master's degree applicants who lack a base in the same or a related discipline would be through the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma programs.

Where a prospective student has insufficient grounding in the discipline, the Course Co-ordinator may approve that the student undertake appropriate preparatory study, eg short pre-term programs, or advanced undergraduate courses or graduate courses at the Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma level, prior to undertaking the Master's degree.

### **2. CREDIT POINTS AND LENGTH OF COURSE**

Any postgraduate coursework program should comply with the following schema:

<b>Graduate Award</b>	<b>Minimum Total CP</b>	<b>Min duration of FT study</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Graduate/Postgraduate Certificate	40 cp	One Semester	
Graduate/Postgraduate Diploma	80 cp	Two Semesters	Includes Graduate Certificate where the Graduate Diploma builds directly upon it
Master's degree for those entering with a three year Bachelor degree	160 cp	Four semesters	Includes Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma where the Master's program builds directly upon them
Master's degree that is a continuance in the same or an equivalent discipline for those entering with at least a four year Bachelor award	80 cp	Two Semesters	

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Guidelines for Nomenclature of Awards at <http://my.acu.edu.au/policies/> – Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures – 4.5

### 3. EXIT PROVISIONS

Where an articulated suite of programs exists, a candidate who enrolled directly into a higher level program but does not complete the program requirements may be awarded a lesser qualification if the requirements for such award are fulfilled.

### 4. RESEARCH COMPONENT OF POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAMS

Section 4 of these Guidelines applies to those postgraduate coursework programs (other than professional doctorates) which do have a research component. It is acknowledged that not all postgraduate coursework programs include a research component.

#### 4.1 Description of research component

If there is a research component in a postgraduate coursework program, it will be named as follows:

- (a) *Research Project*: for work with a value of less than 40 cp;
- (b) *Thesis*: for work with a value of 40 cp or more.

#### 4.2 Length of research component of a postgraduate coursework program

<i>Research Project Report</i>	not more than 20,000 words
<i>Thesis</i> (equal to or greater than 40 cp)	not more than 50,000 words

#### 4.3 Characteristics of research component of postgraduate coursework program

##### *Research Project Report*

- demonstrates an understanding of the research process and scholarly conventions in the discipline;
- provides an ordered exposition of knowledge gained through the candidate's own efforts;
- involves research which is more limited in scope than a Thesis in that it should –
  - (a) limit attention to a few main questions;
  - (b) keep data collection to a minimum;
  - (c) be able to be conducted in situations which are easily accessible to the candidate;
- involves a literature review which should place the study in its research context and be critical without claiming to be exhaustive;
- may include speculation based on the findings, instead of aiming at generalisations grounded on the findings;
- demonstrates the candidate's ability to present the outcome of the study in a disciplined way that conforms to the scholarly conventions of the discipline;
- should be presented in succinct formal English.

##### *Thesis*

- demonstrates possession of advanced knowledge in a specialised field;
- shows evidence of an original investigation and testing of hypotheses;
- shows an ability to make critical use of published work and source materials as well as an appreciation of the relationship between the topic and the wider field of knowledge;
- demonstrates competence in independent work or experimentation and an understanding of the techniques and/or approaches which are appropriate to the research questions;
- involves research the scope of which need not be a new line of development but which shows that the candidate has mastered research and synthetic skills in producing a contribution to knowledge;
- demonstrates the contribution to knowledge by drawing generalisations or further hypotheses for testing that are well grounded in the findings;
- should be presented in succinct formal English.

### 5. SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH COMPONENT OF A POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAM

#### 5.1 Supervision

The research component will be taken under the guidance of a supervisor appointed by the School Committee on the recommendation of the relevant Head of School.

#### 5.2 Submission of Research Project Report/Thesis

On completion of the course of study and research, a candidate will submit a written report in the form of a Research Project Report or Thesis, based on work carried out during the period of study and research.

### 5.3 Appointment of Examiners

5.3.1 Examiners will be appointed by the School Committee on the advice of the Head of School, after consultation with the supervisor.

5.3.2 For a Thesis, the Committee will appoint two examiners, At least one examiner must be external to Australian Catholic University. A candidate's supervisor may not be appointed to be an examiner for a Thesis.

5.3.3 For a Research Project Report, the Committee will appoint one examiner. The examiner may be an academic staff member of Australian Catholic University and may be the candidate's supervisor.

### 5.4 Examination of Research Project Report/Thesis

5.4.1 *The examiners will examine the Research Project Report/Thesis and make separate reports which will be submitted for consideration to the relevant School Committee. Each examiner's report will include a recommendation:*

- (a) That the student has met the Research Project Report/Thesis requirements and has passed outright; or
- (b) That the student has passed the Research Project Report/Thesis requirements, subject to minor changes, as recommended in the examiners' reports, being made to the satisfaction of the Head of School acting on the advice of the supervisor; or
- (c) That the student be permitted to revise and re-submit the Research Project Report/Thesis within an appropriate time frame of no more than two semesters, as determined by the School Committee, in consultation with the supervisor and in accordance with the Academic Regulations; or
- (d) That the student has failed to meet the Research Project Report/Thesis requirements and has failed outright.

5.4.2 Examiners will also be requested to provide a grade for the Research Project Report/Thesis in accordance with the following:

Grade	Numerical marks	Explanation
HD	85-100	The Research Project Report/Thesis demonstrates a level of competence which would lead the examiner to recommend that the candidate is competent to proceed to doctoral studies
DI	75-84	With some strengthening of present competence, remedying of particular deficiencies and close supervision, the candidate could proceed with reasonable confidence to doctoral studies
CR	65-74	The Research Project Report/Thesis presented is a sufficiently competent piece of work but indicates that the candidate is unlikely to be able to complete doctoral studies. The grade to be awarded depends on a judgement about the relative level of the Report/Thesis.
PA	50-64	
NN	Less than 50	The Research Project Report/Thesis should not be passed.

These grades are awarded on the basis of the Research Project Report/Thesis as submitted for examination and not on the basis of a version produced after revisions have been made in the light of examiners' comments.

### 5.5 Resolution of differences in assessment of a Thesis

5.5.1 In the case of a serious difference of opinion between Thesis examiners, that is, more than one grade apart, the Head of School will refer the issue to a designated School sub-committee. The sub-committee will be given copies of the Thesis and the examiners' reports and may:

- (a) seek consultation with and/or between the examiners to resolve the issue;
- (b) not re-examine the Thesis but make a recommendation to the School based upon the advice found within the conflicting examiners' reports;

- (c) ask the candidate to re-submit the Thesis within two semesters only to the examiner that required re-submission; or
- (d) appoint an adjudicator, external to the sub-committee, who will be given a copy of the Thesis and the examiners' reports. The adjudicator's report will be provided to the sub-committee for it to make a final recommendation to the School Committee.

5.5.2 In the case where one of the examiners has recommended a fail outright and this issue cannot be resolved amongst the examiners outright, the Committee must seek adjudication.

#### **5.6 Revision and resubmission**

A candidate may be permitted to re-submit their Research Project Report/Thesis no more than twice.

A candidate who has been deemed to have failed to meet the Research Project Report/Thesis requirements by the examiner(s) and has failed outright shall not be permitted to re-submit the Research Project Report/Thesis for further examination.

#### **5.7 Award of degree**

The School Committee, or for Faculty-wide Masters' programs the relevant Faculty Committee, will receive the reports of the examiner(s) and, following successful completion of any requirements, will recommend the candidate to the Faculty Board as a graduand.

#### **5.8 Report to the University Research and Research Training Management Committee**

Following Faculty Board approval, the outcome of the examination of a Thesis will also be reported to the University Research and Research Training Management Committee.