Higher Degree by Research Thesis Presentation - Guidelines

Introduction

These Guidelines apply to theses prepared for Higher Degrees by Research (HDR).

HDR candidates at the University of the Sunshine Coast may submit either a:

• Traditional thesis; or
• Thesis by publication

These guidelines stipulate requirements for thesis presentation and where applicable, specifications are provided to ensure conformity to discipline expectations. Regardless of the discipline area, it is required that the thesis be presented in scholarly English, and be free from typographical and grammatical errors.

1. Word length

Doctor of Philosophy - The length of a conventional thesis should normally be no more than 80,000 words, excluding appendices and footnotes. A thesis based on published research articles would normally be expected to be shorter than a conventional thesis: approximately 60,000 words.

Research Masters – a Masters by research thesis should normally be approximately 40,000 words in length, excluding appendices and footnotes. A thesis based on published research articles would normally be expected to be shorter than a conventional thesis: approximately 30,000 words.

Creative Arts Exegesis - At Doctoral level, the exegesis should normally be between 30,000 and 40,000 words. At Masters level, the exegesis should normally be between 15,000 and 20,000 words. There is no recommended word length for the creative component.

In the event that there is a legitimate case for a thesis or exegesis to exceed these limits, special representation should be made to the Chair, Research Degrees Committee, for prior written approval to submit such a thesis or exegesis.

2. Format

Typically, the following type of approach should be adopted for the format of the thesis or exegesis:

• International Standard Paper Size A4 (297 x 210mm) should be used;
• The typing should be 1.5 spaced, presented in a clear and legible font and would normally be expected to be double-sided;
• Left and right margins should be no less than 30mm and page numbers should appear inside the margins;
• Pages should be numbered consecutively and clearly;
• Folding diagrams or charts should be arranged so as to open to the top and right;
• Before producing final copies of a thesis for submission, the candidate should ensure that all the spelling, grammar, punctuation and choice of language are of a higher degree standard and the bibliography is complete and exact. It is recommended that candidates have their theses proof-read before producing final copies.
3. Structure

All theses should incorporate, in the following order:

Title Page
A title page, giving the name of the thesis in full, the full name and academic qualifications of the candidate, the full details of the degree for which the work is submitted, the name of the Faculty associated with the work, the name and address of the University associated with the work, and the date of submission.

Abstract
A one to two page abstract of the work. This abstract or summary may be used for citation purposes, and should clearly outline the essence of the submitted work.

Declaration of Originality
A declaration of originality, attesting that the work does not contain material which has been previously published or written by any person other than the candidate except where due and proper reference has been given in the text. The declaration should be signed and dated by the candidate.

In the case of work that is based upon joint research or publications, the statement should include a statement disclosing the relative contributions of the respective authors, and, where practical, be counter-signed by all contributors.

Acknowledgements
An acknowledgements page, in which due scholarly acknowledgements are made by the candidate to persons or organisations that have materially assisted with the work. Due care must be exercised here to preserve the anonymity of persons or organisations who have been protected by research ethics conditions.

Table of Contents
A table of contents, listing page references to the major sections and subsections of the text. Usually, pages that precede the main text are numbered using small Roman numerals, and the main text is numbered using Arabic numerals.

Lists of Tables, Illustrations and Figures
A list of tables, a list of illustrations, and a list of figures.

List of original publications (for candidates submitting a PhD thesis by publication. To facilitate referencing to the published research papers and to items within published papers, accurate page numbers should be provided for all aspects of the thesis.

Preface (Optional)
A general preface to the work is optional. The words of the Preface will count towards the word total. The Preface can be used to make a researcher’s statement and/or contextualise the work in a condensed way.

Body of the thesis
The format of the main text will differ depending on the type of thesis a candidate is submitting.

For candidates submitting a Traditional Thesis
An example of a traditional thesis format could include chapters such as:
Introduction
Literature Review
Theoretical Framework
Methodology and Methods
Research Data Analysis and Findings
Discussion and Conclusion

For candidates submitting a Thesis by Publication
A thesis by publication will consist of a series of related research articles, at least one of which has been published bound into the one volume, accompanied as appropriate by an introduction and a conclusion chapter. The thesis may be organised as the candidate deems most logical, and will normally consist of chapters or sections such as:
- Introduction/context
- Research articles (incorporating Literature Review, Methodology and Methods, etc.)
- Findings and Conclusions

Further guidelines for theses by publication are included in section 4 of this document.

For candidates submitting a Creative Arts Product and Exegesis
The examinable material for the Doctor or Master of Creative Arts is constituted by the creative arts product and an exegesis. Where the creative work consists of printed materials, it must be bound into the same volume as the exegesis. The creative work may precede or follow the exegesis as the candidate deems most logical.

Where the creative work consists of non-print materials, the requirements are specified in section 7 of the Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Submission and Examination – Procedures.

The exegesis will normally consist of chapters or sections such as:
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology and Methods
- Findings and Conclusions

It is understood that in some cases the work will require discipline modifications of these accepted structures. Whereas modifications will be regarded as legitimate, the variants should still present the reader with a logical development of ideas from context to conclusion. Should the student and supervisor be uncertain about the proposed structure of the main text, advice can be sought from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) through the Chair, Research Degrees Committee.

References
A reference list, containing full details of all works referred to in the text, using a standard referencing system must be included. There are many accepted referencing systems, but it is usual that a discipline will have a preferred system. The supervisor and student should ensure that the referencing system is followed precisely and accurately. In the case of cross-disciplinary studies that might imply different referencing systems, the supervisor and student should decide upon one of these systems, and not mix referencing conventions.

Bibliography
In some theses, a bibliography will be expected, that lists all works that have contributed to the development of the scholarly ideas behind the thesis. In certain specialist areas, it will also be usual to distinguish between primary sources and secondary sources, and it is recommended that a student seek out recent examples of theses published in the area and use these as a model.

Appendices
Any appendices referred to in the text.
4. Requirements for Thesis by Publication

Refer to section 5.6 of the Higher Degree by Research – Academic Policy for information on thesis by publication. Below, each discipline describes the local requirements for thesis by publication:

Faculty of Arts and Business
The number and type of publications appropriate for a thesis by publication in the discipline and also the format of the thesis by publication will be considered at the confirmation of candidature milestone. The independent reviewer(s) will discuss and reach agreement with the supervisors and the chair of the confirmation panel, and will provide this advice to the candidate as part of their feedback for the confirmation of candidature milestone. If a candidate wishes to change to thesis by publication outside of confirmation of candidature milestone, the supervision panel should convene with an independent reviewer and arrange formal approval through the faculty and Research Degrees Committee.

School of Education
The submission will take the form of a collection of original authored published works and an introductory statement. It is expected that for a significant number of the publications, the applicant will be the first-named author. All publications must have been subjected to peer-review.

The collection of published works may include, for example:

- Books and monographs
- Chapters in books
- Scholarly articles, e.g., refereed articles in research journals

The introductory statement will:

- In chronological order, list the publications being presented for examination
- Indicate the way in which the applicant’s work has developed
- Demonstrate the contemporary relevance of each publication
- Make the way in which the publications make an original scholarly contribution to knowledge clear
- Provide a thematic overview which converts the individual publications into an integrated work
- Make the applicant’s contribution to all jointly authored publications clear.

School of Health and Sport Sciences
The thesis will take the form of at least three thematically linked research articles for a doctoral candidate and one research article for a masters candidate authored by the candidate during candidature, each of which has gone through a peer-review process and has been accepted for publication in a refereed research journal. The thesis should further provide an exegesis or literature review on the overarching research theme that gives background and context to the research question/s. The candidate’s role in each publication should be clearly stated and highlight how individual publications address the main aim/s of the thesis. A summarising and conclusion statement relevant to the publications should be included at the end of the thesis.

Where one or more of the submitted papers are co-authored, each should be preceded by a clear statement of the intellectual contribution of the candidate which is signed by each of the co-authors, as well as the relative role of the candidate in the execution of the study and writing of the paper.

The candidate is normally expected to be the first-named author on their submitted papers. Where a candidate includes a paper on which they are not first-named author they should also include a statement explaining why they are not, and describing their contribution to the paper.
Quality refereed journals are the most appropriate research outlets for publication of papers for this type of thesis. Research books may also be accepted.

School of Nursing and Midwifery
The thesis summarises the research work undertaken by the candidate to provide evidence of academic achievement in original research.

A thesis may contain the following elements:

a. **Synopsis / extended abstract**: a concise account of the research question/s or hypotheses, need and significance, the key findings of the results, the significance of the work undertaken, the main conclusions drawn, and how the included works are linked within a cogent intellectual framework.

b. **Introduction**: a description of the research conducted, aims/questions and or hypothesis. An account of the research papers that links the papers to provide continuity for the thesis so the reader can understand the logic underpinning the progression of the research.

c. **Literature Review**: If one of the published papers is not a comprehensive literature review that underpins the study program as a whole then a literature review or additional literature review is provided in this section.

d. **Methodology**

e. **Main body**: may be in the in the form at least 3 papers, all of which should be accepted for publication in peer reviewed journals appropriate to the topic. Each paper should be prefaced with a clear explanation of the contribution made by each author of a jointly authored paper. This section should include a detailed account that explains the relationship of the papers to each other and the research question.

f. **Discussion and Conclusion**: sets out how the work presented in the main body / chapters has advanced the discipline, what new research questions it generated, and how the findings can be contextualised into the broader research domain.

Where there is multiple authorship, the candidate should be principal author on at least two of the three papers and have written permission of the co-authors.

School of Science and Engineering
1. The thesis summarizes the research work undertaken by the candidate to provide evidence of academic achievement, rigour and innovation in original research.

2. A thesis comprises three parts:

   a. **Synopsis / extended abstract**
      A concise account of the main hypotheses/questions addressed, the key findings of the results, the significance of the work undertaken and the main conclusions drawn). PhD – max. 1,000 words; Masters – max. 750 words.

   b. **Main body**
      Generally presented in the form of a series of chapters that resemble in style, format, structure and presentation publications in leading journals in the discipline. PhD – max. 75,000 words; Masters – max. 40,000 words.

   c. **Conclusions**
      This section sets out how the work presented in the main body has advanced the discipline, what new hypotheses it generated, and how the findings can be contextualised into the broader research domain. PhD – max. 4,000 words; Masters – max. 3,000 words.
The chapters can either be already published papers, papers in press, manuscripts submitted or in review, or manuscripts to be submitted. Whilst students are generally encouraged to publish their PhD in a timely fashion in the peer-reviewed literature, a thesis can be any mix of published/in-review/submitted papers.

The style and structure of chapters should preferably be consistent throughout the main body of the thesis. There are no prescriptive constraints on font, layout or similar formatting requirements. Most theses in the School of Science and Engineering will follow the format of chapters that resemble publications (as outlined above), but a more traditional format of a thesis is also allowed.

5. Requirements for a Traditional Thesis

Below, each discipline describes the local requirements for a traditional thesis (where different from those described in sections 1-3 of this document).

Faculty of Arts and Business
Any potential change to the format of a traditional thesis appropriate for the discipline will be discussed at the confirmation of candidature milestone. The independent reviewer(s) will discuss and reach agreement with the supervisors and the chair of the confirmation panel, and will provide this advice to the candidate as part of their feedback for the confirmation of candidature milestone. If the candidate wishes to deviate from the traditional thesis format, the supervision panel should convene with an independent reviewer and arrange formal approval through the faculty and Research Degrees Committee.

Master of Creative Arts and Doctor of Creative Arts work will be peer reviewed (by at least one academic who is not a member of the supervision panel) prior to submission of the 'Intention to Submit' form.

Only if the work is considered by the peer reviewer to be of appropriate quality for the program will the HDR candidate be allowed to submit the 'Intention to Submit' form.

School of Education
No additional requirements. See sections 1-3 of this document.

School of Health and Sport Sciences
No additional requirements. See sections 1-3 of this document.

School of Nursing and Midwifery
No additional requirements, see sections 1-3 of this document. This structure and the naming of different chapters/elements of the thesis document may vary depending on the methods employed in the research study.

School of Science and Engineering
A traditional thesis in the School of Science and Engineering should be presented in the same format as thesis by publication (see section 4 of this document), presenting papers that have not yet been accepted for publication, but are in progress towards publication.

Examiners receiving a thesis in this format must be guided to assess this on the merit of the work, not as a thesis by publication.