

Submitting your thesis

All HDR candidates need to ensure their thesis meets Usyd's submission requirements.

HDRAC provides clear advice on [how to prepare your thesis for submission](#), and a [helpful checklist on how to successfully submit your thesis](#).

Thesis word length

Depending on your degree, faculty and discipline, your thesis has a prescribed word limit.

The word limit doesn't include appendices. **The normal limit for a PhD thesis is 80,000 words, and 50,000 words for a master's thesis – although this varies between degrees.** If you exceed your word limit, you need to request a word-limit extension from your associate dean. The absolute limit for an extension is 100,000 words for a PhD thesis, and 60,000 words for a master's thesis.

Choice of examiners

When you complete your [notice of intent to submit](#) on RECS (at least 3 months before thesis submission), your lead supervisor should discuss the selection of possible examiners with you. You have the right to recommend examiners, and to advise on individuals you prefer to not be appointed as an examiner. **You should make these recommendations to your lead supervisor in writing.** Your lead supervisor is responsible for the final recommendations to the chair of the examination.

The process of selection and appointment of examiners is rigorous and can take considerable time. If you make a written recommendation, the chair of the examination must forward it to the faculty committee responsible for examination, for approval. The names of examiners will only be disclosed when you receive your examiners' reports, or in the case of oral or exhibition examination, on your request after the thesis has been submitted.

Modes of examination

Oral examinations may be used in two instances at Usyd. Examiners may meet with a student after they have submitted their thesis to consider points of clarification of principle

or detail in the thesis. Oral examinations are also used for fine or visual arts degrees, where a student presents one or more creative pieces and then attends an oral exam with their examiners.

When issues arise

Most of the time submitting is trouble-free and a time for (almost!) celebrating. However, sometimes the process doesn't run smoothly, and difficulties arise. Below are some of the stressful and frustrating issues that we hear about, and possible resolutions to assist you.

Unexpected delays on your part

Your [notice of intent to submit](#) should be lodged at least 3 months before your expected thesis submission date. But if you don't lodge it in time, don't panic – it's not a big problem.

What is causing the delay?

For personal or family-related issues you might benefit from a short [leave of absence](#) to deal with things, so that you can get back to the submitting process. You have a right to take leave, but you must notify your lead supervisor, and you may need to check your scholarship conditions. This is a critical time so you and your supervisors may have to discuss a possible change to your submission date.

A new submission date could make you liable for tuition fees if your scholarship can't be extended. In this case, missing the original submission date may be something to try and avoid.

Disagreement with your supervisor over mode of examination

In most faculties you have the right to choose your mode of examination – oral, exhibition or thesis-only examination – your choice must be endorsed by your lead supervisor. Your supervisor might disagree with your desired mode of examination. If this happens, we recommend that you remain open-minded to their reasons. Respect their experience and knowledge of the examination process, and their understanding of your capabilities and the thesis you have completed.

Start discussing modes of examination with all your supervisors as soon as you develop a preference – don't assume that you and your lead supervisor have the same opinions on

this. Early agreement assists you and your supervisors to work towards the best preparation for a successful thesis examination.

If your lead supervisor declines to endorse your choice, the final decision will be made by the postgraduate coordinator.

Supervisor won't certify that your thesis is ready for examination

Your thesis must meet a long list of requirements before it's considered ready for examination. One requirement is that your lead supervisor certifies that in their opinion, the thesis is sufficiently well-presented and does not exceed the word limit (or any approved extended word limit). On the rare occasion that a lead supervisor declines to provide the statement, you may still be able to submit your thesis. In this situation HDRAC will contact the associate dean of your faculty and request that they review the thesis and decide whether to send to examination.

Thesis is declined examination

If your lead supervisor doesn't certify that your thesis is ready for examination, there is no guarantee that the associate dean will send the thesis to examination. If the associate dean, after reviewing your thesis, declines to send it for examination, they must provide, in writing, the reasons why and the changes you are required to complete prior to examination. Such reasons are set out in the [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Policy 2015](#).

If this happens you will be either asked to re-enrol or to [Show Good Cause](#). A decision by the associate dean to decline to send your thesis to examination is an academic decision and therefore subject to appeal, in accordance with [the Appeals Rule](#). [Submit your appeal to the Student Affairs Unit](#).

Academic honesty or misconduct allegations

On submission, your thesis is passed through plagiarism detection software. HDRAC will notify your faculty if there is evidence of possible inappropriate academic practice, code breach or research misconduct.

In cases of alleged plagiarism, the associate dean will notify you and your lead supervisor, and you will be required to respond in accordance with the [Academic Integrity Policy 2022](#). They will usually return a copy of your thesis, marked-up with possible breaches, and

ask you to respond in writing to explain these issues. In some faculties an allegation of academic dishonesty in a submitted thesis may instead be addressed by asking you to [Show Good Cause](#).

In cases of alleged code breach or research misconduct you will be notified by either the Research Integrity Office or your faculty, who will manage the investigation in accordance with the [Research Code of Conduct 2019](#). You will be required to provide detailed written responses.

In certain circumstances it's possible that one or all of your supervisors may have a level of responsibility in the alleged breach or misconduct. In this situation, it's very important for you to have independent advice.

If you receive any of these allegations as a result of your thesis submission, you should [contact us](#) for advice immediately.

Policies

- [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Policy 2015 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Thesis and Examination of Higher Degree by Research Procedures 2020](#)
- [Research Code of Conduct 2019](#)
- [University of Sydney \(Student Discipline\) Rule 2016](#)
- [University of Sydney \(Student Academic Appeals\) Rule 2021](#).

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