
RESEARCH IN POSTGRADUATE COURSES

Preamble

These guidelines apply to the research component in ACD postgraduate awards. All students undertaking a research component of 12 credit points or more within their course must comply with these guidelines and procedures for undertaking research projects.

Legislation/Standards

National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes

National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans

Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice

Delegations

The ACD Board has delegated to the ACD Research Committee responsibility for the implementation of these guidelines.

Approvals

These guidelines were approved by the ACD Board on 24 June 2004 and amendments approved on 22 April 2008 and updated January 2011.

Provisions

1. Appointment of supervisors

1.1 Students undertaking research projects as part of an ACD postgraduate award will have a principal supervisor appointed for the research component of their course. A co-supervisor will be appointed for Doctor of Ministry research projects. A co-supervisor may be appointed for Master of Ministry research projects if necessary.

1.2 These appointments will be approved by the Research Committee of the ACD General Board. The Committee should ensure that:

- a) The principal supervisor is suitably qualified, has relevant expertise in the student's research area, and has a satisfactory record of postgraduate supervision;
- b) Supervisors at master level must hold a masters degree or higher degree or have equivalent experience;
- c) At least one of the supervisors is a member of faculty of one of the ACD constituent member colleges;
- d) The principal supervisor can reasonably be expected to provide supervision for the duration of the research project;
- e) Students have been consulted about their nominated supervisor and agree to work with that supervisor before the appointment is confirmed.

1.3 If more than one supervisor has been appointed they shall determine the percentage of workload to be carried by each.

1.4 The principal supervisor has the responsibility of coordinating communication between the supervisors and the student and for resolving any issues.

2. Responsibilities of supervisors

2.1 The responsibilities of the principal supervisor and co-supervisor of a research project are set out in the appendix.

3. Ethical guidelines for research

3.1 Students who undertake research involving human participants should be aware that:

- a) Their research may have social, legal, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications for the participants as well as legal implications for themselves, their college and the ACD;
- b) They must abide by procedures and policies set down by the ACD to ensure that their research is carried out in an ethical manner; and
- c) Before any approach is made to potential participants or the commencement of collection of any data, ACD students intending to undertake any research project involving human subjects must obtain approval from the ACD Human Research Ethics Committee.

3.2 It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to ensure that their students undertaking research are made aware of the ACD Ethical Guidelines for Research.

4. Submission of research project for examination

4.1 A student must be enrolled in a research project unit in order to submit the research for examination.

4.2 A student must sign a declaration that the project does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text or footnotes.

4.3 A student shall submit three copies of the research project to the ACD Executive Officer for examination.

5. Appointment of examiners

5.1 All research projects shall be subject to examination.

5.2 There shall be two examiners. For a Master of Ministry project at least one examiner will be external to the ACD. For a Doctor of Ministry project both examiners will be external to the ACD.

5.3 The supervisor will consult the student on any objections the student may have to the potential examiners and will nominate examiners to the course convenor.

5.4 The appointment of examiners will be approved by the ACD Research Committee on the nomination of the course convenor.

5.5 Upon submission of a research project the Executive Officer will forward copies to examiners who have accepted invitations to examine the research project.

6. Consideration of reports of examiners

6.1 The ACD Research Committee will determine the outcome of the examination of the research project and the final grade in accordance with the following procedures:

- a) When both examiners have assessed the research project as 'Acceptable' the student will be awarded the appropriate final grade in the ACD Grade System which is 'Satisfactory'.
- b) When both examiners have assessed the research project as 'Not Acceptable' the student will be awarded the appropriate final grade in the ACD Grade System which is 'Fail'.

- c) When both examiners have assessed the research project as 'Acceptable with amendments' and when the student has completed those amendments to the satisfaction of the principal supervisor, the student will be awarded the appropriate final grade in the ACD Grade System which is 'Satisfactory'.
 - d) When the examiners' assessment differs (Acceptable/Not Acceptable or Acceptable with amendments/Not Acceptable) the Research Committee will consider the examiners reports and determine an appropriate method for resolving on a final grade. This may be by asking the examiners to confer and resolve the matter or by appointing a third examiner or other appropriate method. The Committee may ask the student and principal supervisor to comment on the examiners reports; however the examiners must remain anonymous.
- 6.2 Examiners will be asked by the ACD Executive Officer to return copies of the research project to the ACD at the completion of the examination process. One copy will be lodged in the Adelaide Theological Library.
- 7. Student appeals and complaints**
- 7.1 A student may request a review of the grade given for a research project on the grounds that:
- a) The assessment procedures were not adhered to;
 - b) The grade is wrong or unfair.
- 7.2 The following procedures apply in respect of a request to review the grade given for a research project:
- a) The student must begin the process by consulting the course convenor who shall advise the Research Committee via the Executive Officer.
 - b) The Research Committee shall confirm the grade or amend the grade or determine that review of the grade should occur.
- 7.3 If a review is recommended the Executive Officer shall arrange for a review by the Research Committee to commence within ten working days. The review may include:
- a) Ensuring that the process followed for assessing and determining the grade was in accordance with the above procedures for appointment of examiners and consideration of the reports of examiners;
 - b) Arranging for review of the grade.
- 8.4 A review of the grade may include an examination by a reviewer, who should be a person other than the original examiners and who has expertise in the research area. After the reviewer has independently determined a grade for the research project, he or she will discuss this with the original two examiners and they will endeavor to reach agreement on the grade. If agreement cannot be reached the Research Committee shall mediate and, in the event of agreement still not being possible, will determine the grade. If amendment of the grade is recommended it shall be submitted to the ACD Board for approval.

APPENDIX A

Procedures for Undertaking a Postgraduate Course of Study

1) Admission to a Postgraduate Course of Study

A potential applicant must apply for admission on the appropriate form available from the ACD Executive Officer. The Executive Officer will submit the application for consideration by the ACD Research Committee.

2) Appointment of a Research Project Supervisor

Before undertaking a research project as part of an ACD postgraduate award, a student should:

- a) Discuss the project in general terms with their college academic advisor or the Course Convenor;
- b) Make contact with a possible supervisor and discuss the planned research project. If the person approached is willing to undertake the project, the student should advise the Course Convenor who will seek the approval for the appointment of the supervisor from the Research Committee. Students may seek the assistance of the Course Convenor in locating an appropriate supervisor.

3) Approval of Research Project

When the supervisor and the student have agreed upon a suitable research project the student should complete the form *Application for Approval of Master of Ministry Research Project*. The form is available from the ACD Executive Officer. This will require a brief project proposal of approximately 500 words for submission to the Research Committee for approval. The proposal should indicate whether or not the research will involve any human subjects. The completed form should be submitted to the Executive Officer or the Course Convenor. The student should *not* commence the research project until notice of the approval of the Research Committee has been received.

4) Ethics Approval

Any project involving human subjects must be approved by the ACD Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Policy and procedures documents may be obtained from the ACD Executive Officer. A student must *not* commence a research project involving human subjects until HREC approval has been received.

5) Monitoring Academic Progress

The academic progress of students in coursework units is monitored by the ACD Examinations Committee which is responsible for approving results and monitoring academic progress in all coursework units.

The academic progress of students in their ministry research project is reviewed annually. The student and their supervisor complete the Review of Progress Form which is submitted to the Course Convenor for consideration. The Course Convenor reports the outcome to the Executive Officer. The Course Convenor reports annually to the Research Committee and the Academic Standards Advisory Committee on the progress of postgraduate students in their research projects.

Appendix B

Roles and Responsibilities in Postgraduate Research

1. Role of the Convenor of the MMin and DMin
2. Responsibilities of the Convenor in relation to the Research Component
3. Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor of a Research Component
4. Responsibilities of the Student enrolled in a Research Component

Roles and Responsibilities in Postgraduate Research

1. Role of the Convenor of the MMin and DMin courses

The role of the Convenor of the MMin/DMin courses includes:

1. providing information about the courses to prospective students, including an application form when requested, and discussing the prospective student's educational needs, goals and interests;
2. determining that the area of research proposed by a prospective student is appropriate for the research component of the degree, and ascertaining the availability of a suitable supervisor who needs to be appointed as a prerequisite for the student's entry to the course;
3. preparing recommendations for the Research Committee regarding the admission of applicants to the courses;
4. advising students about appropriate coursework options relevant to their educational goals and about the specific requirements of the coursework component of the course;
5. arranging the Program Seminars each year, including setting dates, topics, presenters and venues. The Convenor will normally chair these seminars and will arrange for the assessment of each;
6. liaising with Lecturers and Reading Course supervisors to ensure good communication regarding academic expectations for student performance, academic progress and timely assessment of course components;
7. ensuring that efficient administrative procedures that document students' progress are maintained, including courses taken, assessment outcomes and contact details of supervisors;
8. Monitoring standards of teaching using appropriate instruments for the evaluation of teaching and learning;
9. arranging payment for external Supervisors and Readers in line with ACD policy;
10. ensuring that annual reports on student progress are submitted in a timely manner;
11. resolving any problems arising from supervision in consultation with the student and supervisor(s) in a manner consistent with the grievance procedures in the ACD policy Research in Postgraduate Courses;
12. ensuring that students and supervisors are aware of their individual responsibilities;
13. ensuring that the additional responsibilities that fall to the Convenor in relation to the research component of the degrees are efficiently and effectively carried out.

2. Responsibilities of the Convenor in Relation to the Research Component

In relation to the research component of the MMin and DMin courses it is the responsibility of the Convenor to ensure that:

1. the area of research proposed by a candidate is appropriate for the research component of the degree. The Convenor may seek the views of other individuals or bodies, including the Research Committee, if required, before providing advice to the candidate;
2. advice is available to the student about the space, resources and facilities that are available to support their research;
3. the proposed principal supervisor is sufficiently expert in the area of research, and has the time and commitment to be able to offer the student proper supervision;
4. proper supervision can be provided and maintained throughout the research period;
5. each student has written guidelines and preparation concerning ethical and safety procedures appropriate to the proposed program of research;
6. a student proposing research involving a confidentiality agreement has been counselled about the consequences of restricted access to their research results;
7. appropriate opportunities are provided by way of seminars and the like, for students to develop the skills required successfully to undertake their research project;
8. opportunities are provided for students to interact with and develop profitable intellectual relationships with one another and with faculty;
9. students are provided with a statement that sets out the procedures by which students may make representation to the Convenor if they believe that their work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside their control;
10. student progress is regularly monitored, communication with supervisors is maintained, regular written reports are arranged for, and the ACD policy on grievances is followed when dealing with unresolved conflicts between supervisors and students.

3. Responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor and Co-Supervisor of a Research Component

The responsibilities of the principal supervisor of a research component of a postgraduate coursework award include:

1. planning an appropriate research project with the student. This planning will initially include:
 - a. evaluating the feasibility of the proposed area of research;
 - b. discussing the value of the research;
 - c. ensuring that the scope of the research is appropriate to the weighting of the research component and to the award;
 - d. ensuring that he or she has the necessary knowledge/expertise to effectively supervise the student in the area chosen;
 - e. ensuring that adequate resources and funding will exist to support the research;
 - f. assisting the student in the preparation of a research proposal for submission to the Research Committee.
2. maintaining close and regular contact with the student and establishing at the beginning the basis on which contact will be made. The supervisor will advise the student on the pace of progress, and ensuring that a reasonable timetable is set to permit the research project to be completed in the appropriate time;
3. requiring written work from the student on a pre-arranged and agreed schedule, so that the student's progress can be assessed at regular intervals, and making constructive and critical comments in a timely fashion on any written work presented to the supervisor;
4. ensuring that any comments and feedback are given in a constructive, supportive and sensitive fashion;
5. becoming well acquainted with the student's academic and/or professional background so that if the student needs additional skills and/or knowledge to undertake the proposed research project, the student can be informed how these might be acquired;

6. making the student aware at the beginning of any theoretical, methodological and/or philosophical assumptions held by the supervisor that might impact on the research project or the working relationship between supervisor and student;
7. informing the student about any planned leave (or retirement) within the duration of the research project and the arrangements made to provide effective supervision during such an absence;
8. advising the student on ethical and safety procedures appropriate to the proposed program of research, assisting the student to obtain approval to proceed with their project from the ACD Ethics Committee;
9. ensuring the student is aware at the start of their project of the impact on access to their research results of any confidentiality agreements that they may be considering entering into;
10. monitoring carefully the performance of the student relative to the standard for the postgraduate coursework award, and ensuring that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected is brought to the student's attention in writing. The supervisor should assist with developing solutions to problems as they are identified;
11. being alert to developments in the research area that might require resources not initially identified;
12. informing the Convenor of any difficulties and problems experienced by the student that are likely to impede progress. If a problem is not resolved, the Convenor should be advised in writing;
13. immediately informing the Convenor should the supervisory relationship break down. In such an instance, Convenor should ensure that other supervisory arrangements are made to the satisfaction of the student. Where the supervisor is the Convenor, the Convenor's College Principal shall ensure that satisfactory supervisory arrangements are made;
14. commenting critically on the content and the drafts of the research component of the MMin project or DMin thesis and, at the time of submission, checking that the research component is of sufficient standard to be, *prima facie*, worthy of examination; and
15. advising the Convenor of the names and credentials of suitable examiners after consultation with the student.

Co-supervisor

In the case of DMin students the Co-supervisor will assist the Principal Supervisor in carrying out the responsibilities of supervisory role.

1. The Supervisor, Co-supervisor and Student will agree on the manner and division of supervisory responsibilities;
2. Normally the Co-supervisor will contribute her or his individual expertise to the student's project;
3. The Co-supervisor may contribute in other ways, for example, by taking on the role of Principal Supervisor if the Principal Supervisor is to be absent for a period of time.

4. Responsibilities of the Student Enrolled in a Research Component

The responsibilities of students enrolled in a research component of a postgraduate coursework award include:

1. becoming familiar with the relevant Rules governing the course or degree in which they are enrolled, and the ACD's policies and procedures on research components, including grievance procedures, ethics, leave of absence, library use/photocopying, fees and fee help;
2. selecting supervisors with the assistance of the Convenor;
3. planning an appropriate research project with the supervisor and co-supervisor;
4. discussing with the supervisors the type of help considered most useful, and keeping to an agreed schedule of meetings which will ensure regular contact;
5. advising the supervisor of any theoretical, methodological and/or philosophical assumptions held by the student that might impact on the research project or the working relationship between student and supervisors;
6. taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties and sharing responsibility for seeking solutions;
7. maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with stages agreed to with the supervisors, including, in particular, presentation of any required written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage;
8. discussion at regular intervals of the progress towards, and impediments to, maintaining the agreed timetable with the supervisors;
9. adhering at all times to the ethical practices appropriate to the program;
10. accepting responsibility for producing the final copies of the research component, its content, and ensuring that it is in accord with the relevant requirements, including the standard of presentation.