POSTGRADUATE PROTOCOLS

Postgraduate Research Formats Protocol

Summary

When undertaking a research component[1], the body of work must read as a cohesive whole. The work must have a clear statement of the research questions, outline the theoretical overview that provides the overall framework, and show clear evidence of the student's original contribution. There are different format options for submission available.

Purpose

This protocol details three available options for the formatting of the research component. This protocol details three research formats:

Format One – Traditional Research Structure
Format Two – Manuscript Structure
Format Three – Practice-Oriented Structure

Scope

This protocol is to be used for the structuring of doctoral, master's and bachelor with honours research components.

Higher doctorates, where the thesis is composed solely of a portfolio of publications, are not covered in this protocol.

Application

AUT defines a thesis as being of 90 points or greater, whereas dissertations and research projects are fewer than 90 points. Research less than 90 points may utilise format two.

A research component must be an integrated body of work that reads as a cohesive whole.

Format One: Traditional Research Structure

The traditional thesis should normally be structured using the following chapter format:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Research Design / Methods / Methodology
- Results / Findings
- Discussion / Conclusions / Implications
- References

The traditional format does not preclude the inclusion of published manuscripts resultant from thesis work, in the appendices.

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[1] The term 'Research Component' may include a thesis, dissertation, research project or exegesis.

Format Two: Manuscript Structure

Students may prepare their research for submission to peer-reviewed publications as they progress through their degree. The peer-review process takes time, and may not have necessarily been accepted to publication stage or equivalent (e.g. conference papers submitted for computing conferences) within the enrolment period, so a submitted research component may consist of work that is:

- In preparation for submission to a peer-reviewed journal, or equivalent
- Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal or equivalent, or
- Published in a peer-reviewed journal or equivalent

Any of these three options are considered from here as 'manuscripts' and represent work that is specifically written as a standalone manuscript. The manuscript(s) must be resultant from work completed during the student's enrolment in the research degree. These manuscripts may include reviews, and experimental findings. A research component using this format requires a comprehensive overall discussion and conclusion chapter, and explicit links of at least half a page as a prelude between distinct chapters each of which form a sequential and cohesive research component.

The manuscripts should be presented as they have been submitted for the target publication, with the exception that referencing format must be standardised throughout the research component (the format may be chosen, but clearly nominated in the introductory material). A reference list by chapter may be included, in addition to a final reference list for the entire research component. The introductory chapter should state how the research component is structured, including details on direct inclusion of manuscripts as chapters.

Inherent in the manuscript format will be some discussion and conclusion material within each chapter, thus it is acknowledged that some repetition may occur between the chapters as manuscripts, and the final discussion and conclusion chapter. The discussion and conclusion chapter are required (indeed essential), and should synthesize all findings in the research component as a whole, including practical implications, and future research directions.

The proposed research component structure should be indicated on the Confirmation of Candidature form, identifying where manuscripts are planned to be incorporated.

The manuscript format should be structured as follows:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review (which might also be considered as Manuscript One if prepared as such)
- Prelude/introduction to Manuscript One
- Manuscript One
- Prelude/introduction to Manuscript Two
- Manuscript Two (onwards in subsequent chapters as relevant)
- Discussion / Conclusions / Implications
- References

Format Two Requirements

The student is required to be the principal author of the manuscript, with a stated contribution which constitutes the leadership and writing up of the work reported in the manuscript(s). Research components including manuscripts must include a signed declaration which specify the extent and nature of the contribution and co-authors' contribution to each of the manuscripts.

Research Components of 240 points or more should contain a minimum of **two** manuscripts as defined above prior to submission for examination.

Research Components of less than 240 points must contain a minimum of **one** manuscript as defined above prior to submission for examination.

It is important for students and supervisors to continue to publish papers, and it is recommended that the student and supervisor sign a statement that the papers are either submitted or ready for submission.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any published work (or parts thereof) included in the research component comply with the copyright provisions of the publisher. If published manuscripts that form part of a submitted research component are identified through Turnitin on submission, a brief explanatory statement should be included on the Lodgement for Examination form.

Format Three: Practice-Oriented Structure
Practice-Oriented research should include an artefact, performance or system and exegesis for examination. The term 'thesis' encompasses the creative/practice-oriented component and the exegesis as a whole.

Where the thesis is substantially practice-oriented, the artefact is accompanied by an exegesis. The exegesis relates directly to the practice-oriented work and as such does not have a research topic or question of its own. The purpose of the exegesis is to elucidate and clarify the relationship between the central concept, key contexts, focus and methodology of the practice-oriented work, thereby setting the thesis in its relevant critical context.

The exegesis format should follow:
-   A full explanatory introduction
-   A substantial review of the literature/ critically review knowledge relevant to the practice-oriented works
-   Detailed description of methodologies and data/ critical commentary on the research process and outcome
-   Discussion of relevant theoretical, historical and critical context
-   A discussion that overviews the thesis project
-   Reflection of thesis project

Word Range
Students should consult their supervisor on what is appropriate for their topic and their proposed research.

Programme	Format One	Format Two	Format Three
Doctoral	Normally between 40,000 and 80,000 with an upper limit of 100,000 words*	Normally between 30,000 and 60,000 words with an upper limit of 80,000 words*	Normally between 40,000 to 50,000 words*
Master's Thesis 90 Points and Above	Normally between 20,000 and 40,000 words with an upper limit of 60,000 words *	Normally between 10,000 and 40,000 words with an upper limit of 60,000 words *	Normally between 7,000 and 15,000 words*
Research Component of below 90 points	Normally between 6,000 and 30,000 words*	Normally between 6,000 and 25,000 words*	Normally between 6,000 and 8,000 words*

∗   This is dependent on the topic and the specific research undertaken, and may vary depending on methodology and the relevant point's value of the research e.g. 60 points vs 120 points.

Research Component of below 90 points
Research components of below 90 points which follow the traditional format is normally between 6,000 and 30,000 words (excluding bibliographies), depending on the topic and the specific research undertaken.

Research components of below 90 points which follows the format two structure would normally be between 6,000 and 25,000 words (excluding bibliographies), depending on the topic and the specific research undertaken.

Research Components of 90 Points and Above

Research components of 90 points and above following the traditional manuscript format is normally between 20,000 and 40,000 words (excluding bibliographies), depending on the topic and the specific research undertaken, with an upper limit of 60,000 words.

Research components of 90 points and above following the manuscript format is normally between 10,000 and 40,000 words (excluding bibliographies), depending on the topic and the specific research undertaken, with an upper limit of 60,000 words.

Doctoral Theses

A doctoral thesis which follows the traditional format one structure is normally between 40,000 and 80,000 words, with an upper limit of 100,000 words (excluding bibliographies and appendices).

A doctoral thesis which follows the format two (manuscript) structure is normally between 30,000 and 60,000 words, with an upper limit of 80,000 words (excluding bibliographies and appendices).

Practice-oriented

Research components of less than 90 points which follows the format three structure would normally be between 6,000 to 8,000 words.

Research components of 90 points and above which follows the format three exegesis would normally be between 7,000 and 15,000 words.

A doctoral thesis which follows the format three structure is normally between 40,000 and 50,000 words. These limits exclude bibliographies and is accompanied by a body of practical work that forms the primary site of the inquiry.

Outcome

Student research can be structured into one of three formatting options; format one - a traditional thesis structure, format two - a manuscript structure, and format three - a practice-oriented structure.

Review

Original Approval Date

June 2018

Version Approvals

V1.0 June 2018
V1.1 Sept 2018
V1.2 June 2021
V1.3 May 2022
V1.4 June 2023
V1.5 September 2024

Review Date

June 2025

Effective Date

June 2018

Related Protocols
Creative Examinations Protocol
Doctoral Examination Protocol