



Sydney College of Divinity

A federation of leaders in theological education

RESEARCH

DEGREE

Programs

USER'S

GUIDE

2007

Master of Theology (Honours)

Master of Arts (Honours)

Doctor of Ministry

Doctor of Philosophy

Doctor of Theology

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## Code of Supervisory Practice

## Welcome

The Sydney College of Divinity has justifiably acquired the reputation as an excellent research consortium and a leading intellectual and creative resource to the communities it serves. It is also characterised by a broad and balanced application of learning which focuses on preparing the next generation of Christian teachers and scholars.

The SCD has one of the largest bodies of theological staff in the country and it also possesses a number of excellent libraries. The number of postgraduate research scholars is also growing year by year across a broad range of theological disciplines, and the completion rate is high. One of the central aims of our College is to ‘encourage theological scholarship which is ecumenically sensitive and relevant to issues of culture and society in Australia and Oceania.’

Some of you may be contemplating research training opportunities, or a potential academic career, or simply deepening your understanding on a particular theological topic. Others of you may be looking for the opportunity for professional development in ministry at the highest academic level and thereby, through a period of systematic reflection on the practice of ministry and by a critical, creative and academically informed investigation, to make a distinct contribution to the profession.

Whatever your goal, I hope that you might be inspired to forge a partnership with us. We warmly welcome your enquiry about possible entry into one of our several research programs.

Raymond Nobbs

## What makes a research degree program?

In general, research at doctoral and masters honours level has four characteristics. It is original, bringing to light what has not been seen, grasped or understood previously. As well, it is a systematic investigation setting any new findings in dialogue with prior studies and results. Thirdly, the new findings should enhance our stock of knowledge, making a contribution to the development of human culture. Finally research is something that is disseminated rather than a light hidden under a bushel.

A research degree program provides you with the opportunity to make an original contribution to a particular field of research along the following lines:

- Make a critical advancement of the current state of a question;
- Resolve a difficulty in the discipline;
- Defend a particular thesis;
- Bring together diverse ideas and methodologies as a new contribution to the current state of a particular issue.

While this list is not exhaustive it provides some directions for identifying a research question amongst your broader areas of interest.

A research program is not restricted to researching and writing a thesis. It includes your own development as a researcher. The program also seeks to build your skills as a communicator, writer, presenter, defender and critic. Alongside this, the program attempts to provide opportunities for you to meet other researchers and to make a contribution to academic societies and publications. The research programs aim to build a strong and vibrant research culture

## **Who oversees the degree program?**

At the Sydney College of Divinity the research program is overseen by the Research Degree Committee which is answerable to the Academic Board. The Research Degree Committee is comprised of academics from diverse areas who have a special interest in research and research candidates. It is the Research Degree Committee that recommends your candidature for approval by the Academic Board. They receive regular reports from your supervisor about your progress. As well, they arrange the research seminars, the research degree workshop, the doctoral assessment panel, and the examination of your thesis. An up-to-date list of the members of the committee can be found on the SCD website.

In the main you will deal with the Director of Research, who ensures the smooth running of the research programs, handles any inquiries, conducts the initial interviews, and is the immediate contact person for questions, difficulties and advice about your particular program. Contact can be made through the Sydney College of Divinity Office.

The Research Degree Committee consists of:

- Dr Jim Harrison, Wesley Institute (Chair)
- Dr Matthew Del Nevo, Broken Bay Institute
- Dr Stuart Devenish, Australian College of Ministries
- Dr Guy Freeland, St Andrews Greek Orthodox Theological College
- Assoc. Prof. Mark Hutchinson, Southern Cross College
- Prof Barry Leal
- Assoc. Prof. Gerard Moore, Sydney College of Divinity

They can be contacted through the Office of the Sydney College of Divinity and through their respective member institute. The contact details of each Member Institute are found on the college website ([www.scd.edu.au](http://www.scd.edu.au)).

## **Questions I need to consider**

It is worth taking time to reflect on why you want to enter a research degree program. The following questions are designed to help you do just that.

- 1) Why do I want to do this degree?
- 2) Do I have time available to be a candidate in the program? The normal requirement for full-time is 40 hours per week, and part-time is about 20 hours per week. Factor in here such things as family, work, and other commitments.

- 3) Have I the necessary financial backing?
- 4) Do I understand the nature of the degree?
- 5) What questions emerge from my reading of the Handbook, including the regulations?
- 6) Am I presently enrolled in another degree program? (Candidates may not be enrolled in two degree programs concurrently)
- 7) Do I have the requisite academic referees, and for the Doctor of Ministry pastoral experience & referees?
- 8) How can I demonstrate academic capability?
- 9) How can I demonstrate research skills?
- 10) Am I aware of the specific requirements of the program? Some of these are:
  - core units and elective units in the DMin
  - the DMin colloquia
  - the Research Degree Workshop
  - regular attendance and presentations at Research Seminars
  - Formal Assessment Panel during candidature
  - supervision
- 11) Do I have a specific area of interest that fits the nature of the degree?
- 12) Can the college provide the supervision and resources I will require?
- 13) Does my topic require ethical clearance?
- 14) Am I able to have email as the regular means of contact?
- 15) FOR CANDIDATES FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE: Do I have the necessary IELTS score or equivalent?
- 16) FOR OVERSEAS CANDIDATES: Do I have the necessary visa?

### **Personal and family considerations**

The above questions should help your thinking about the aims of the degree program and whether it will meet your needs. A point that cannot be stressed too much is that enrolment in a research program takes up a great amount of your time and energy. It also costs money and in the short term can limit your earning potential. You will be immersing yourself in a very limited area of research which you may find, to your surprise, is not to everyone's taste or interest. Your spouse, family and friends will not always be on your

wavelength, and may offer less than warm support as you spend yet another weekend or week or holiday period poring over books, chasing down yet another reference, taking notes, revising chapters and thinking things through. Your friends and family alike may not share your passion for the topic, nor be too sympathetic to your complaints about supervision, library facilities, lack of time and other typical areas for a whinge and a whine. Neither your workplace nor your boss will necessarily be overly enraptured by your studies, no matter how much you see their relevance. Even your pets may find your behaviour a bit odd, though they are usually understanding.

The bottom line is that during your period of research you need actively to maintain the quality of the relationships that matter to you. Of its nature research demands a degree of isolation, yet be alert to the social cost as well as the financial. Keep your loved ones in the loop, and ensure that you are taking the time necessary to be present to them.

## **The responsibilities of a research degree candidate**

Entry into a research degree program often means a new way of studying and researching. You are now fully responsible for the shape of your research. In the first instance you will have made yourself familiar with the requirements of the program and the regulations that govern the degree. You will work with a supervisor to concentrate your interest into a single research topic, write a proposal, have it accepted and then research and complete your thesis.

As you are the primary researcher it falls to you to access the appropriate resources. So that you are in a position to research at the masters (honours) or doctoral level the Research Degree Committee, in consultation with your supervisor, may set down further requirements for you. This can apply to such things as languages needed for specific topics or if your research requires some specific skills that you have not yet attained (e.g. statistical method).

It falls to you to monitor your progress through the degree. Of course your supervisor will be helpful to this process, but it is the responsibility of you, the candidate, to contact the supervisor, make appointments, submit written work as arranged, fulfill all requirements and maintain your enrolment. Use the 'progress markers' set out below to keep track of the tasks you have completed and the ones that lie ahead.

## **Supervision**

Supervision is an integral part of the research program. You need to take an active part in finding a supervisor who is expert in your area and with whom you wish to work. You also must be prepared to be guided by your supervisor.

Normally supervisors are chosen from the Sydney College of Divinity academic staff or from academics who have been approved by the college. The list is wide and comprehensive. A list of academic staff and their specialties and interests is found on the website. The Research Degree Committee will help to match you with someone suited to your research. You need to bear in mind that you can only do research with us if the committee can arrange

suitable supervision. If your area of interest falls outside our expertise then you will be directed to a university program more appropriate to your requirements.

In the PhD and ThD programs you will also have an associate supervisor, whose role is to assist the main supervisor by offering advice on particular specialized areas that are a part of your research project. She or he also can act as a general backup and sounding board.

Your supervisor will help you choose a suitable thesis topic and guide you in writing the proposal. He or she will oversee your researching, writing and presenting the thesis, as well as your completion of any corrections required by the examiners and the depositing of final copies with the Office. Your supervisor will assist you in your participation in workshops, seminars, panel presentations and colloquia, all the while offering positive encouragement and opening opportunities for you to be active in professional societies and publish in refereed journals. In all this the ultimate responsibility is yours and the driving force is you. It is up to you to arrange meetings, present material on time, meet the requirements of the program and write to deadline.

Your supervisor will write a report at the end of each semester. This is sent to the Research Degree Committee and is part of the monitoring of your progress. The supervisor's report covers questions and areas such as the following:

- a) Has the candidate fulfilled coursework (DMin) or other requirements set out by the Research Degree Committee?
- b) Number of consultations this semester?
- c) How much written work has been submitted by the candidate?
- d) General comments as supervisor
- e) Any areas of concern
- f) How many research seminars has the candidate attended this semester?
- g) Has the candidate given a presentation at a seminar this year? Was it this semester?
- h) Is the candidate a member of any academic societies?
- i) Has the candidate been active in those societies?
- j) List any publications the candidate has had this semester?
- k) Do you recommend continuation of candidature?

Towards the close of each semester you must speak with your supervisor about your progress.

As your thesis nears completion, your supervisor will recommend to the Research Degree Committee names of possible examiners. At this stage you need to speak with him or her about this and work on the list together.

A more detailed description of the roles of the supervisor, the candidate and the Research Degree Committee is found below under the heading 'Code of Supervisory Practice'. Here you will find directions if disputes and major differences arise between you and your supervisor.

## **Research Culture**

As a nascent researcher your enrolment provides you with a range of opportunities to enter the research culture of your discipline. The seminars, workshops and panels are designed to further your ability to present, evaluate and critique complex material. They are forums in which you can be stimulated by the work of your fellows, build collaborative partnerships and be encouraged in your own endeavours. All this acts as an aid in your thesis writing.

With the help of your supervisor you will be encouraged to join and be active in the professional societies and academies of your discipline. You will also be encouraged to publish in refereed journals, aiming at one article per year for those who are full-time and one every two for part-time candidates. While you cannot publish material that is directly part of your thesis you will have turned up enough extra material for an article.

Once completed, your thesis will be able to be accessed by others in the field through the Sydney College of Divinity eThesis site. It may well be accepted for publication by the SCD Press or another academic press. It is important to talk this through with your supervisor once you are closer to completion. It should be your goal to publish your dissertation in one form or another. For help with this read the 'Guide to publishing my dissertation' below and speak with your supervisor and the Director of Research.

### **Research Degree Workshop**

Each candidate is required to complete, as early as possible in her or his program, the Research Degree Workshop. Usually held over one or two days, this workshop introduces you to the nitty gritty of research. The workshop is made up of a series of interactive presentations led by experienced academics from within and outside the Sydney College of Divinity. Topics covered include:

- the nature of research
- what examiners are looking for
- the thesis topic
- supervision
- ethical considerations in research
- practical advice on writing your thesis
- the requirements of the SCD research degree programs

The workshop is designed to meet your needs, so take the opportunity to ask whatever questions are on your mind.

The workshop often provides the first chance to meet other research candidates, an important first step in developing a viable and supportive research culture.

### **Research seminars**

Throughout your period of candidature you will be required to attend a number of Research Seminars during the year and present at one of them. These seminars are an important part of the research culture of the Sydney College of Divinity. They bring candidates and faculty together to discuss ideas and directions, allow experts and fellow researchers to offer concrete advice to candidates, and help break the isolation that can be a part of advanced study.

Normally there will be six or more research seminars held per year. Candidates are required to attend two thirds or more of them. Attendance is a requirement for continued enrolment in the program. The focus of your presentation will vary depending on your progress. A first presentation is a good opportunity to speak to your thesis proposal and gain feedback. Your final presentation should be based in the findings of your almost completed thesis. Presentations given in intervening years can concentrate on a particular point or chapter you are researching.

### **DMin Colloquia**

DMin candidates are to participate in the annual colloquia, specific to the needs of DMin candidates, in which there is the opportunity to reflect on and integrate learning from coursework and ministry experiences.

### **Doctoral Assessment Panel**

If you are enrolled in a doctoral program you will be required to present to the Doctoral Assessment Panel within the first year of full-time research or eighteen months part-time. The panel is made up mainly of academics from the Sydney College of Divinity, complemented with members of other university faculties. Some will be from your area of expertise.

The first aim of this assessment is to ensure as far as possible that you are progressing satisfactorily towards the completion of your thesis by the due date. The second aim is that it provides an opportunity for you to present as a researcher with something to offer current scholarship and in turn be questioned as a 'peer' by the panel academics.

Your presentation to the panel will be based on your thesis proposal, which should be ready for submission to the Research Degree Committee. If the thesis proposal is already accepted, your presentation should cover the state of your research to date. You will be required to give a twenty to twenty five minute presentation on your topic proposal, including the question itself, the methodology or methodologies involved, the current state of research on the topic, the direction and outline of your thesis, and the particular contribution you hope to make. This provides the panel with the opportunity to probe your task and approach, all the while enabling them to develop a sense of your progress. About twenty to twenty five minutes is given over for the members of the panel to make observations, put questions and offer advice for your consideration. Your supervisor will be of help in preparing you for this important event.

You may wish to provide handouts and/or project information on screen as an aid to the members of the panel, and the other candidates present. Please check with that the technology you need is available. The time limit will be kept closely, not only for the benefit of the timetable but because speaking to time is an important discipline for academic research.

### **Originality**

One aspect of your research, albeit a vital one, is that your research be original. This is discussed fully at the Research Degree Workshop. An aspect of the discussion is the breadth of your literature review, which both turns up important secondary material and

enables you to judge whether your topic has already been the subject of exhaustive research. This literature search necessitates a thorough review of the most recent literature and studies. How to find these? A primary step is to check the databases of research done and being done, using the internet. The best site, one which will lead you to all manner of countries and data bases is that of the “Australian Digital Theses Program”. A second is that of the NDLTD – the networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. Type the names into your search engine and follow the many links. These sites can turn up a good range of secondary material and ancillary studies as well, so look long and hard at them.

## **Research ethics**

Your research must be conducted in an ethical manner. Some topics that involve research using human subjects or access to personal data will require clearance from the Sydney College of Divinity Ethics Committee. They may also require clearance from other ethics committees if the research also involves another institution such as a hospital. Under no circumstances can these requirements be avoided and you should not make your own decisions about whether they apply to you.

Whether or not you need to obtain a specific ethics clearance, you must still conduct ethical research. Some of the problem areas for ethical research include:

- (a) **PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.
- (b) **FRAUD:** Academic fraud is the falsification and fabrication of, or dishonesty in reporting research results.
- (c) **MISREPRESENTATION:** Misrepresentation is the giving of false or misleading information in academic matters. It includes falsely claiming credit for past study; falsely stating that thesis material has not been used in another thesis.
- (d) **UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR:** Unethical behaviour is behaviour that breaches accepted ethical standards. It includes failing to observe the terms of an ethical approval to conduct research; misuse of confidential information obtained in field education.

Failure to conduct ethical research may result in the candidate being charged with academic misconduct. Candidates should not assume that such misconduct will not be detected. The Academic Misconduct Regulations can be found on the SCD website.

## **The Beth Blackall Prize**

The Sydney College of Divinity Council in April 1997 established a fund from which a grant and medal would be awarded annually to the candidate who presented a thesis of excellence which was also the best at graduate level. The Prize marks the contribution to the Sydney College of Divinity made by Dr Bettina (Beth) Blackall who died on 7 June, 1996. Dr Blackall’s understanding of the processes of higher education was invaluable when advising on the development of an appropriate infrastructure for the Sydney College of Divinity. Her

involvement with all of our Member Institutions and her sensitivity to their histories, their traditions and their confessional stances, reflected her ecumenical approach to theological education.

## **Enrolment**

The first step towards entry into the program is to organize an interview with the Director of Research. You will be sent the list of questions that we have found helpful to prospective candidates. As well you may be sent an application form and various forms associated with FEE-HELP and other schemes. It is important to realize that the Sydney College of Divinity will only take candidates when it considers it has the resources and supervision that are appropriate to the area of interest.

## **Entry into the program and provisional enrolment**

Following the interview you may be invited to apply to enter the program. Your acceptance is processed by the Research Degree Committee. The Committee determines whether you are qualified and suitable to enter the degree. If so it will then offer you provisional enrolment and give direction concerning supervision and your choice of topic.

Your initial enrolment, which is provisional, is completed when the appropriate forms have been filled out, fees are paid, documentation checked and additional items such as digital photographs supplied. Your period of candidature commences when you enroll in a semester following your acceptance into the degree. You need to pay fees promptly otherwise your enrolment may lapse.

Your period of provisional enrolment comes to a close when the Research Degree Committee accepts your thesis proposal.

## **Re-enrolment**

Re-enrolment for the following year takes place during November. You will be required to fill out a form and return it. A further digital photograph may be required. You will then be sent a candidate card that will cover you for the next twelve months. Presently the re-enrollment procedures are under review, so there may be some changes to the current pattern.

## **Can my candidature be terminated?**

There are a number of points along the way when steps can be taken by the Research Degree Committee to terminate your candidature. These measures are called upon if your progress is unsatisfactory. Again be aware that your candidature is provisional until your thesis proposal has been approved by the Research Degree Committee. Examples of unsatisfactory progress include lack of work, consistently poor quality work, academic misconduct, failure to pay fees, failure to attend research seminars and other requirements and the like.

## **International candidates**

It is the responsibility of international candidates to have the appropriate visa for study in Australia and sufficient funds to support them through the program. If English is your

second language you will be required to attain a score of 7.0 on the IELTS test or provide evidence of an equivalent ability in the language.

For further information that pertains specifically to international candidates contact the Director of Research.

### **Progression through the program: 'progress markers'**

The various research degree programs have their own **progress markers** which indicate where you are in the program. It is important to fulfill these requirements on time so that you know your studies are on track. They are:

#### **MA (Hons) and MTh(Hons) Candidature: Progress Markers**

##### **Period of Candidature (excluding any leave of absence granted):**

Full-time minimum 1 Year: Full-time maximum 2 years: Part-time maximum 3 Years

1. **Admission** to the program: your period of candidature begins with the date of enrolment set.
2. **Thesis proposal approval:**  
 Full-time: within six months of enrolment  
 Part-time: one year after enrolment
3. **Research Degree Workshop:** You complete the workshop. When: full & part-time, within the year after provisional admission.
4. **Research Seminar paper:** given at a Research Seminar on the area of your topic:  
 Full-time: within the year after admission  
 Part-time: within 18 months of admission
5. **Penultimate Step:** submission of completed thesis for examination
6. **Final Step:** You complete, to the satisfaction of your supervisor, any corrections to the thesis that the examiners have required and then present two bound copies to the SCD Office along with an electronic copy for the SCD eThesis site.

#### **DMin Candidature: Progress Markers**

##### **Period of Candidature (excluding any leave of absence granted):**

Full-time minimum 3 Years: Full-time maximum 5 years: Part-time maximum 7 Years

1. **Provisional admission** to the program by the Research Degree Committee means that your period of candidature begins when you enroll in the semester you designate.

2. Completion of the required **four coursework units** and participation in the related **colloquia**.
3. **Research Degree Workshop:** You complete the workshop. When: full & part-time, within the year after provisional admission.
4. **Thesis proposal submission:**  
 Full-time: no later than one semester after completion of coursework units  
 Part-time: one year after completion of coursework units
5. **Admission** to candidacy upon the acceptance of the thesis topic by the Research Degree Committee.
6. **First Research Seminar paper:** given at a Research Seminar on the area of your topic:  
 Full-time: within the year after admission to full candidacy  
 Part-time: within 18 months of admission to full candidacy
7. **Second Research Seminar paper:** given at a Research Seminar on a part of your thesis.  
 Full-time: within the second year after admission to full candidacy  
 Part-time: within the period between 18 months and 36 months after admission to full candidacy
8. **Doctoral Assessment Panel:**  
 Full-time and part-time: one semester prior to submission
9. **Penultimate Step:** submission of completed thesis for examination
10. **Final Step:** You complete, to the satisfaction of your supervisor, any corrections to the thesis that the examiners have required and then present three bound copies to the college Office along with an electronic copy for the eThesis site.

## PhD & ThD Candidature: Progress Markers

### Period of Candidature (excluding any leave of absence granted):

Full-time minimum 3 Years: Full-time maximum 5 years: Part-time maximum 7 Years

1. **Admission** to the program by the Research Degree Committee means that your period of candidature begins when you enroll in the semester you designate. Your enrolment is provisional until your thesis proposal is accepted.
2. **Thesis proposal submission:** For full-time candidates this should be no later than one semester after admission; for part-time one year after admission.

3. **Admission** to full candidacy takes place upon the acceptance of the thesis topic by the Research Degree Committee.
4. **Research Degree Workshop:** You complete the workshop. When: full & part-time, within the year after provisional admission.
5. **First Research Seminar paper:** You present a paper at a Research Seminar on the area of your topic. When: full-time, within the year after admission & part-time, within 18 months of admission.
6. **Doctoral Assessment Panel:** You give a presentation on your proposed topic to a panel of academics. When: full-time, within the first year of candidature & part-time, within the first 18 months of candidature
7. **Second Research Seminar paper:** You present a paper at a Research Seminar on a part of your thesis. When: full-time, within the second year of candidature & part-time, within the period between 18 months and 36 months of candidature.
8. **Third Research Seminar paper:** You present a paper at a Research Seminar on the almost completed thesis as a whole. When: Full-time, within the third year of candidature & Part-time, within the final 12 months of candidature
9. **Penultimate Step:** You submit the completed thesis for examination
10. **Final Step:** You complete, to the satisfaction of your supervisor, any corrections to the thesis that the examiners have required and then three present bound copies to the college Office along with an electronic copy for the eThesis site.

## Fees and Scholarships

### Fees

Fees for candidates in the MA(Hons), MTh(Hons), PhD, and ThD are set for 2007 at \$3,540 per semester full-time and \$1770 part-time. The same applies for DMin candidates at the thesis writing stage. DMin candidates in the coursework stage of the program pay a fee of \$1770 for each course unit.

### Payment of Fees

Invoices are sent out twice per year, once in November for the first semester of the following year and then again in May for the second semester. Payment is due within 30 days. If you do not pay your fees your candidature may lapse.

### FEE-HELP

Candidates either can pay full fees or if eligible call upon the provisions of FEE-HELP. For information about FEE-HELP contact the Sydney College of Divinity Office. At present there are no scholarships available for new enrolments.

## Library

On enrolment you will be invited to nominate one of the Sydney College of Divinity Member Institute libraries as your 'home' library. This means that you will use that library as your primary research base. You can work through your home library for interlibrary loans and other services. It is important to make yourself known to the library staff as early as possible in your candidature and discuss what services they have to offer. One result of your nomination is that the library will then receive some funds to help build its research collection. The list of our libraries can be found on the website.

The Sydney College of Divinity also has an agreement for share use with the Macquarie University Library. If you need to use their collection first contact the Office for the appropriate letter. We will also negotiate with other libraries on your behalf if you can show that their holdings and services are important for your research.

## *Pacifica*

All candidates in the research programs are given a subscription to *Pacifica*, a journal of Australasian Theological Studies and of which the Sydney College of Divinity is a sponsor. Our hope is that it will encourage your research and reading, as well as provide an avenue for publishing your articles.

## Time limits

Each program has a normal length for completion if you are full-time. There is also a maximum length if you are a part-time candidate. Each program also has a minimum length of time; you can only hand in your thesis for examination after that minimum period of candidature has been passed. Completion of the program on time within valid and agreed limits is not simply a convenience but an integral aspect of your training as a researcher.

## Leave of absence

If for serious reason you need to take leave of absence from your research then you should contact the Director of Research as soon as possible to make an application to the Research Degree Committee. Your application should clearly state the reasons for seeking this provision and the length of time required. There is a limit of 12 months leave of absence that can be granted. However leave of absence is not counted in the period of candidature. For further details refer to the academic regulations governing your program.

## Withdrawal

For a range of reasons candidates find that they may need to withdraw from a program. In this situation you need to contact the Director of Research. Do not simply let your candidature lapse without getting in touch as this may work against you if, at a later date, you

wish to renew your candidature with the College or apply to enter a program at another university.

## **Full-time and part-time**

Candidates may either be full-time or part-time. Full-time researchers should not take on part-time employment that is too time consuming or onerous. If full-time you should contribute to all research activities so as to take maximum advantage of the opportunity. Full-time candidates may transfer to part-time. This will affect the maximum candidature time remaining for completion of the program calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Clearly part-time research has with it added burdens on time and continuity. It is important that you plan your time closely so that you allow enough time to be able to make reasonable progress within the allotted time limits. As a part-time candidate you are expected to attend all research seminars etc. and to participate as fully as possible in our research culture. If you are a part-time candidate you should consider setting aside a period later in the process during which you can concentrate full-time on writing the thesis.

## **Living out of Sydney**

It is possible for research candidates to live outside of Sydney. However they need to give assurance to the Research Degree Committee that they can easily access supervision, quality library resources, research seminars, workshops and other provisions of the degree that require attendance.

## **The thesis proposal**

An important step in your progress through the degree is the successful submission of your thesis proposal to the Research Degree Committee. The acceptance of the proposal signals the end of your provisional candidature. It means that your research topic cannot be significantly altered except with the permission of the Research Degree Committee.

Not all proposals are accepted when first submitted. The committee may find a number of minor problems and require the proposal be adjusted. This is quite common. If the committee has serious reservations then it is signaling to you that the topic as presented will be very difficult both to complete and to be passed by your examiners. While this is a set back at one level, it allows you to rethink and re-submit a proposal that has a greater likelihood of success. It is important to keep in mind that the primary audience of your thesis is your examiners. They will be asked to assess the work in light of the set of criteria below. Your proposal should reflect these.

Your thesis proposal should have the following features:

- a. Candidate's name
- b. The particular program

- c. Supervisor
- d. Research Question
- e. Description of the Topic and the original contribution it makes to the field
- f. Methodology
- g. Ethical considerations around the research
- h. Outline of the chapters, with allocation of word length
- i. Timeline for completion of the thesis
- j. Bibliography – in standard form

The proposal should be no more than two pages single spaced, excluding the bibliography.

The proposal needs to be tightly written. Your audience is the members of the Research Degree Committee. They will be looking for a thesis topic that requires research, a clear statement of your methods and a consistent use of terminology. The thesis proposal is not a minor essay but a compact, technically competent and compelling presentation. The readers will keenly review the proposal ensuring that your topic is something that can be completed within the parameters of the degree program.

## **Thesis presentation**

The guidelines for the presentation of the thesis are as follows. It is helpful if you apply these from your first written drafts onwards, that way there are no drastic stylistic revisions to be made at the end, often too hurriedly.

- All copies of the thesis shall be in good quality typescript on one side of the paper only. In the main body of the thesis double-spacing of typescript is preferred, but one-and-a-half-spacing is acceptable. Single-spacing may be used only for appendices and footnotes. The paper shall be good quality, medium weight white stock, sufficiently opaque for normal reading.
- Gender inclusive language is to be used.
- The size of the paper shall be A4 (297mm x 210mm) except for illustrative material such as drawings, maps and printouts, on which no restriction is placed.
- The margins on each sheet shall be not less than 40mm on the left-hand side, 20mm on the right-hand side, 30mm at the top and 20mm at the bottom.
- The recommended structural sequence of a thesis is as follows:
  - Title Page
  - Declaration of Originality
  - Acknowledgements (if any)
  - Preface (if any)
  - Table of Contents
  - List of illustrations and tables (if any)
  - Abstract
  - Introduction (if separate from Chapter 1)
  - Chapters in sequence
  - Appendix or appendices (if any)
  - Bibliography.

- The title page shall contain the thesis title, author's name, degree and year of submission.
- The Declaration of Originality shall take the following form:  
*This thesis is based upon original work by the author and a study of the relevant published works as indicated and acknowledged in the text.*  
*Signed:.....*  
*(Author's signature)*  
*Date.....*
- The table of contents should be fairly comprehensive in a thesis, since an index is not usually included.
- Beginning with the first page of Chapter 1, pages should be numbered consecutively using Arabic numerals. Preceding pages, except the title page, should normally be given lower case Roman numerals.
- Each copy of the thesis shall have an abstract of not more than 500 - 700 words bound in. The abstract should indicate the problem investigated, the procedure followed, the general results obtained, and the major conclusions reached. It should not contain any illustrative material or tables.
- Appendices contain supplementary material that the author considers necessary to the interpretation of the text itself. Long tables, raw or relatively unprocessed data, detailed reports or computer printouts are generally more appropriately included in an appendix.
- Materials such as illustrations, charts and tables must not be submitted on the back of typed sheets. Except with the approval of the supervisor, these should be bound facing the text to which they refer, or if necessary, as right-hand pages, immediately after the first reference to them. The caption should be placed at the bottom of the page.
- Materials such as diagrams, maps, and tables which exceed A4 size should be either:
  - (i) folded so as to read as a right-hand page when opened; or
  - (ii) clearly referred to in the text, numbered and folded for insertion in a pocket in the back inside cover of the thesis binding.
- Footnotes at the bottom of each page are preferred, but endnotes will be permitted.

### **Bibliography and Referencing**

No single method of referencing is prescribed, but it is essential that candidates use one or other of the generally recognised systems. Those of the *Journal of Theological Studies*, or the *Journal of Biblical Literature* are recommended.

A useful reference for you to consult is:

L McIntosh *A Style Manual for the Presentation of Papers and Theses in Religion and Theology*, (1994) available from: Centre for Information Studies, Locked Bag 660, WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2678, Phone: +61 2 6933 2325, Fax: +61 2 6933 2733, Email: [cis@csu.edu.au](mailto:cis@csu.edu.au)

Care must be taken in the way that electronic sources are referenced. The Sydney College of Divinity offers the following directives.

Information needed for a complete and accurate reference should normally include:

1. Author's name and initials (if more than one, list them). If there is no individual author, as with printed sources, use organisation or the part of an organisation.
2. Year of publication (if there is no date listed, then you should state that the reference is undated or has no date). The date should ideally be the last date that the page/item was updated.
3. Title of the document being cited, with an edition or version number if later than the first. The title of a web page will normally be the main heading on the page, or in the blue strip at the top of the screen. The title of messages/postings is the subject line.
4. Medium or Type of resource - to show that this is not a printed book or article.
5. Location - URL, address, etc - wherever the user has to go to in order to locate the document in question.
6. Date accessed.

***Examples:***

Department for Education & Skills (2003) The future of higher education [Online], available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hestrategy/> (accessed 9 June 2003)

CORMACK, A Web Security, section 2.1 [Online], available at [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub00/nesli\\_evaluation\\_report.html](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub00/nesli_evaluation_report.html) (accessed 1 December 2000)

## **The examination process**

When you have completed the thesis to the satisfaction of your supervisor you present it to the Research Degree Committee. Your supervisor will have notified the committee that the thesis is nearing completion. Who chooses the examiners? The committee will ask your supervisor to submit a list of possible examiners drawing upon academics across the world. You need to discuss this with your supervisor. However it is the responsibility of the Research Degree Committee to convene a panel of examiners who will read the thesis and write a report in a timely manner. Some examiners take longer than others and there can be some anxious waiting during this period.

How will your thesis be examined? The Research Degree Committee will advise your examiners to assess the thesis, amongst other things, by the following:

- The clarity with which the research question/problem is stated and the scope of the study defined.
- The appropriateness of the theoretical or conceptual framework to the investigation.

- The appropriateness of the methodology in relation to the research question/ problem.
- The precision and consistency with which key terminology is used.
- The depth of the critical assessment of the relevant literature.
- The capacity to demonstrate a link between the literature review and the research question/problem.
- The degree of skill in constructing arguments and sustaining a position throughout the thesis.
- The level of competency in considering possible objections to the position advanced in the thesis.
- The high degree of proficiency in using rigorous argument.
- The careful and accurate presentation of the scholarly apparatus.
- The originality and the level of contribution made to the understanding of the subject.
- The suitability of a substantial amount of the material for publication.
- A clear statement of the conclusions reached.
- The conclusions are justified by the arguments presented.
- An ability to relate the conclusions of the study to the wider discipline.

There are four possible responses to your thesis. One is that the examiners report the thesis be accepted. A second is that the thesis be accepted by the Research Degree Committee on completion of suggested revisions. If this is the case your supervisor will work with you to satisfy the Research Degree Committee that you have properly responded to the comments of the examiners. A third is that the examiners recommend the thesis be significantly revised and re-submitted for examination. Here you will be required to rewrite under the direction of your supervisor and then re-submit your thesis by a date determined by the Research Degree Committee. The fourth response is that the examiners recommend the thesis not be awarded the degree. If this happens you and your supervisor will be contacted by the committee and possible options discussed.

Once any revisions have been completed and the thesis has been accepted, the Research Degree Committee recommends to the Academic Board that you be invited to graduate. The Academic Board will invite you to graduate as long as you have finalized all work, have no outstanding library fines or disputes with the college, and have deposited your thesis in both bound and electronic forms with the Office

You will be sent copies of the examiners' reports and the examiner's copies of your thesis will be returned to you. Your permission is required if an examiner wishes to retain the thesis.

### **Depositing your completed thesis**

You are required to lodge with the college Office two hard bound copies and one electronic copy of your thesis, including all changes made in light of the examiners' reports. The electronic copy will be added to the eThesis site ([www.scd.edu.au](http://www.scd.edu.au) and follow the links).

Each copy of the final version of the thesis shall be bound in boards, covered with buckram or similar, and embossed on the spine as follows:

- (a) At the bottom and across, the words  
“Sydney College of Divinity”
- (b) 90mm from the bottom and across, the degree and year of submission, for example:  
MTh(Hons)  
2005
- (c) Evenly spaced between the statement in (b) and the top of the spine, the initials and surname of the author. No other lettering or decoration shall appear on the spine.
- (d) Where the spine of the thesis is too thin to support lettering across, the wording shall be printed along the spine reading from top to bottom in all cases.

## **Graduation**

When you have satisfied all the requirements and deposited your thesis with the SCD Office you will be officially a ‘graduand’ and eligible to graduate at the next SCD graduation. Congratulations! Soon enough your graduation instructions will arrive in the mail. For the date of the next graduation see the Sydney College of Divinity calendar on the website ([www.scd.edu.au](http://www.scd.edu.au)).

## **Intellectual property, authorship and ethics**

The Sydney College of Divinity asserts joint copyright with the author over the form of a thesis as submitted and published on its thesis site. This does not impede you as the author from seeking publication in book or other printed form, and permission may be sought for republication of the electronic version by submitting a request in writing to the Dean, Sydney College of Divinity.

## **Guide to publishing my dissertation**

Generally, theses are difficult to publish, due to their size and academic form. A number of publishers do specialize in thesis publication, but generally require subvention or a large amount of work on the part of the author: e.g. The Edwin Mellen Press, Sheffield University Press, Mohr Seibek etc. A larger number of sites, such as SCD Press/ Webjournals, Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Collection, UMI, etc., now publish theses electronically. In general, if you are seeking broader print publication then you are advised to approach the publisher to see if there is interest in the project, before spending a significant amount of time on rewriting. Where such interest is not forthcoming – because of the profile of the publisher, a full catalogue, or lack of fit – self publication is possible, but expensive. Publishers (such as Wipf and Stock) are essentially electronic print-on-demand self-publishers who share the costs and income with authors. They have the advantage of a focused approach and an established distribution network.

## **Problems and grievances**

Problems do arise between candidates and supervisors. If this happens to you the best way to work through them is to speak with your supervisor. The difficulties can emerge concerning methodology, research styles, personality differences and simple frustration on your part with the research project itself. Normally supervisors are sensitive to these. Remember they too were once research candidates much like yourself and have experienced much of what you have in the normal course of your research.

An important area for your own learning is the discipline of research. This means attention to time limits, word limits, adherence to accepted style guides, and dogged research. It can also mean that your ideas, theories and lines of inquiry may need to be modified or jettisoned. Your supervisor is your guide in these things, though you may not always perceive him or her as a welcome muse.

Occasionally a candidature runs into more serious difficulties. If this is the case then you may wish to approach the Research Degree Committee either through its convenor or the Director of Research. If the dispute cannot be resolved at this level you may need to take recourse to our grievance policies. These can be found on the website

### **Research Degree Handbook**

All the regulations, procedures, policies, lists of officials, committees, Member Institutions etc are found in the Research Degree Handbook of the Sydney College of Divinity. A copy is posted on the website. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the regulations, procedures and policies that apply to your program.

## CODE OF SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

The research enterprise is one which involves the candidate, the supervisor and the Sydney College of Divinity. Each of the three has responsibilities and obligations to ensure that the enterprise is fruitful.

The Sydney College of Divinity, through its Research Degree Committee:

1. Determines the eligibility of the candidate to undertake research at master (honours) or doctoral level.
2. Determines that the research project is appropriate for the degree.
3. Ensures that proper supervision can be provided and maintained throughout the research period.
4. Appoints supervisors expert in the areas of research and willing to undertake the obligations of supervision.
5. Establishes and monitors mechanisms whereby conflict between the supervisor and the candidate may be resolved.
6. Establishes procedures for all stages of the examination process.
7. Establishes procedures whereby staff inexperienced in supervision are assisted with supervision.
8. Establishes minimum reporting procedures.
9. Establishes examination criteria for theses.

## POLICY DETERMINATION

In the light of these responsibilities the following Code of Practice governing supervision of research for higher degrees is adopted.

### *The Supervisor*

The supervisors are appointed by the Research Degree Committee after consultation with the candidate.

The Sydney College of Divinity expects that supervisors will:

- Assist the candidate to identify a thesis topic suitable in scope and intellectual challenge for the particular degree.
- Develop with the candidate and on his or her behalf forward to the Research Degree Committee a thesis proposal following the approved format.
- Advise the candidate on appropriate source material and its availability.
- Monitor the progress of the work by scheduling regular meetings with the candidate. An average of one per month is suggested. The frequency will probably vary according to stage of development of the thesis.
- Record the outcomes or decisions taken at each meeting with the candidate.
- Provide critical comment on drafts of sections of the work.
- Read and critically comment on the final draft of the thesis.

- Certify that the thesis meets the requirements of the SCD and is ready to be presented for examination.
- Suggest the names of three possible examiners.
- Encourage the candidate to become part of the wider academic community by participating in seminars and conferences, and joining academic societies.
- Advise the successful candidate on possible avenues of publication.
- Provide ongoing assistance to candidates who have been required to re-write and/or re-submit their theses. (see Section on Rewriting below)
- Report on the candidate's progress to the Research Degree Committee once a semester, on the forms provided, and at other times should the supervisors deem it necessary.
- Alert the Research Degree Committee, through the Director of Research, to problems encountered in the supervisory relationship.
- Inform the candidate and the Research Degree Committee of any extended leave so that arrangements may be made for the associate supervisor to take over the supervision.
- Ensure effective communication with the associate supervisor.

### ***The Candidate***

The candidate will

- Inform themselves of the regulations governing the submission and examination of theses.
- Apply to the Research Degree Committee for the appointment of a supervisor. In most cases, candidates will have previously approached one or more potential supervisors to discuss the proposed area of research.
- Arrange with their supervisors for regular meetings at mutually convenient times, generally once a month.
- At the end of each meeting, candidates should have a clear idea of what work is to be done before the next scheduled meeting. Difficulties encountered in carrying out the work should be communicated to the supervisor before the date of the scheduled meeting.
- Provide drafts of sections of work at agreed intervals.
- Alert the Research Degree Committee, through the Director of Research, to serious problems encountered in the supervisory relationship.

### ***Supervision of Candidates Living Outside Metropolitan Areas***

In order to make advanced theological education available to those who wish to benefit from it, the SCD permits some candidates living away from Sydney to pursue higher degrees by research. In order to carry out its responsibility to ensure adequate supervision the SCD requires of such candidates that they:

1. Arrange for a face to face meeting with their supervisor twice per semester;

2. Communicate with the supervisor by phone or in writing at least once a month, irrespective of the progress which has been made in the month which has elapsed.

In addition, candidates should be made aware that, in some cases, the Research Degree Committee may require them to devote some extended period to the writing of the thesis under the direction of the supervisor and close to the supervisor's workplace. The costs associated with such a period will be met by the candidate.

### ***Difficulties in Supervision.***

From time to time, candidates and supervisors may experience difficulties in the supervisory relationship. Disappointment at adverse comments on a draft, increased workload or personal circumstances may cause discouragement or disenchantment with the research task. In many cases, these setbacks are temporary, resolve themselves or may be overcome by the candidate and supervisor re-negotiating the thesis timetable, keeping in mind the completion date.

In some cases, difficulties arise which are of a more intractable nature. In these cases, candidates may avail themselves of the informal and formal grievance procedures which are in place.

### ***Examination of Thesis: the Supervisor's Role***

When the Research Degree Committee invites the candidate to carry out further work on the thesis, the Dean will forward the examiners' reports to the supervisors, who will be invited to write a response which will include a recommendation on how long the candidate might need to complete the re-write.

The role of the supervisor then will be to assist the candidate to appreciate the shortcomings in the thesis and to implement the recommendations made by the examiners in the time allowed.

### ***Difficulties of Candidates from a Non-English Speaking Background***

Although the presentation of the thesis may be affected by difficulties in English expression, candidates cannot expect the supervisor to write the thesis. Common sense will dictate the difference between proofreading, advice on more felicitous expression and writing the thesis in correct English.

Candidates experiencing such difficulties could be recommended to seek the assistance of persons competent in English. Any arrangements which may ensue are completely independent of the Sydney College of Divinity.