1. **12,000 word Research Essays and Honours theses**

1.1 **Scope**

These guidelines cover the assessment of all 12,000 word research essays, including those submitted as part of a Bachelor of Theology (Honours) degree.

1.2 **Purpose**

The purpose of 12,000 word research essays, including those undertaken as part of a BTheol (Hons) program, is to demonstrate advanced theoretical knowledge in one or more disciplines and to assess the capacity of the candidate to undertake further independent research and learning, in particular as part of a higher degree by research program. Students undertaking these extended research essays will be expected to show advanced cognitive, technical and communication skills that enable them to review, consolidate, synthesise and evaluate critically a broad body of knowledge.

Successful students will be expected to show a coherent and advanced understanding of relevant disciplinary principles, and a knowledge of appropriate research principles and methods. They will be able to think critically, and plan and execute a small research project with limited independence. They will demonstrate sound application of relevant scholarly apparatus, and will be able to communicate a clear and coherent argument, with excellent written expression, to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

There is no requirement for the student to generate original knowledge.

1.3 **Length of Dissertations and Essays**

The 12,000 word research essays, including BTheol (Hons) dissertations, must be 12,000 words in length (+/- 10%), inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography, tables and appendices.

1.4 **Criteria**

The examination of a 12,000 word research essay must therefore take into consideration the following criteria:
a) Whether the candidate has demonstrated an advanced knowledge of one or more broad disciplinary areas, and an ability to review, consolidate, synthesise and critically evaluate it.

b) Whether a coherent understanding of underlying disciplinary principles, and a sound knowledge and application of relevant research methodologies and skills have been demonstrated.

c) Whether the candidate has demonstrated the ability to communicate clearly a clear and coherent argument to a logical conclusion.

d) Whether the candidate has demonstrated the ability to plan and execute a small research project with limited independence.

1.5 The Examiner’s Recommendation

Using the form provided, each examiner must supply a written report detailing their assessment and recommending a grade and percentage mark.

1.6 Third Examination

Where, on the basis of the two examiners’ recommendations, the Chair of Examiners is unable to reach a clear decision, the essay may be sent to a third examiner.

1.7 Pathway to Higher Degrees by Research

A student who receives a final mark of Distinction (75%) or better may, subject to meeting all other admission requirements, apply for admission to a higher degree by research at the University of Divinity. Students whose essays are graded between 50% - 74% will be awarded a passing mark for the essay but will not be eligible to apply for admission to a higher degree by research program.
2. Master by Research Theses

2.1 Scope

These guidelines cover the assessment of all minor and major theses, submitted for the higher research degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Master of Theology (MTheol).

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of University of Divinity master by research programs is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship, and as a pathway to further learning. Graduates of a research master degree will be expected to have a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in scholarship in one or more disciplines, and an advanced knowledge of research methods and principles relevant to their area of study.

Graduates will be expected to show mastery of theoretical knowledge and technical skills, an ability to reflect critically on theory and application, and a capacity to communicate a coherent and sustained argument to specialist and non-specialist audiences. Technical mastery includes competency in sourcing and evaluating primary sources, knowledge of the spectrum of opinion in the secondary literature, and an awareness of and familiarity with relevant methodologies, including (where appropriate) foreign and biblical languages.

Master by research graduates will be able to plan and execute a substantial piece of independent research, and demonstrate creative responses to new and/or existing problems. There is no requirement that students will have contributed to the creation of new knowledge.

2.3 Length of Thesis

A master by major thesis must be 40,000 words in length (+/- 10%), inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography, tables and appendices. A master by minor thesis must be 25,000 words (+/- 10%) inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography, tables and appendices.

2.4 Criteria

The examination of a thesis submitted for a master by research degree must therefore take into consideration the following criteria:

a) Whether the candidate has demonstrated sound knowledge of existing scholarship in the field, and an ability to critically evaluate it.

b) Whether technical mastery of relevant methodologies, languages and scholarly apparatus has been demonstrated.

c) Whether the candidate has demonstrated the ability to communicate clearly a sustained and coherent argument.
2.5 The Examiner’s Recommendation

Each examiner must supply a written report detailing their assessment and any recommendations. In addition to the written report, examiners of MPhil and MTheol theses are to recommend, using the form provided, one of the following:

a) That the thesis be accepted without amendment or further examination
b) That the thesis be accepted subject to minor corrections being made to the satisfaction of the supervisor
c) That the thesis be accepted subject to major corrections being made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board
d) That the thesis not be accepted, but be permitted to be revised and submitted for re-examination
e) The thesis not be accepted, and not be permitted to be submitted for re-examination.

2.6 Resubmission of a Thesis

Where, on the basis of the two examiners’ recommendations, the Chair of Examiners determines that the candidate not pass but be permitted to revise the thesis and submit it for re-examination, the following applies:

a) The thesis will normally be examined by the same examiners who did the initial examination
b) The candidate will be given no more than 12 months FTE to revise and resubmit. A candidate who does not re-submit their thesis within that period will be failed.
c) A thesis which is submitted for re-examination will be eligible to receive only the following grades: Pass, Pass with minor revisions, Fail.
3. **Research Doctoral Theses**

3.1 **Scope**

These guidelines cover the assessment of all theses submitted for the research degrees of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Theology (DTheol) and Doctor of Ministry Studies (DMinStuds).

3.2 **Purpose**

The purpose of a research doctorate is to qualify individuals who apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more areas of scholarship. Graduates of a research doctorate will have a systematic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge at the frontier of a discipline area or in an area of professional practice. They will have specialised expert knowledge of the discipline, and of relevant research skills and principles, and will have demonstrated an ability to engage in independent critical reflection and analysis, leading to original insights or to the re-evaluation or modification of existing knowledge.

Graduates of a research doctorate will be able to communicate complex, sustained and original arguments to specialist international audiences. They will demonstrate a high level of scholarly autonomy, and communicate as an expert and responsible scholar in the discipline.

3.3 **Length of Thesis**

The doctoral thesis should not exceed 100,000 words (+/- 10%), inclusive of footnotes, but excluding bibliography, tables and appendices. A thesis for a PhD by exegeted research project should typically be no longer than 50,000 words. A PhD by publication portfolio should be between 100,000 and 120,000 words.

3.4 **Criteria**

The examination of a thesis submitted for a research doctoral degree must therefore take into consideration the following criteria:

a) Whether the candidate has demonstrated expert knowledge of a substantial body of scholarship in the field, and an ability to critically and systematically evaluate it.

b) Whether the candidate has demonstrated expert specialised knowledge of appropriate methodologies and technical skills, including where relevant foreign and biblical languages.

c) Whether the candidate has demonstrated the ability to plan and execute original research leading to new knowledge, or to a re-evaluation or modification of existing knowledge.

d) For DMinStuds candidates, whether the candidate has used the thesis to make a distinctive contribution to the understanding of and/or practice of ministry.

3.5 **The Examiner’s Decision**

Examiners should supply a written report detailing their assessment and any recommendations. In addition to the written report, examiners of research doctoral theses are to recommend, using the form provided, one of the following:
a) That the thesis be accepted without amendment or further examination
b) That the thesis be accepted subject to minor corrections being made to the satisfaction of the supervisor
c) That the thesis be accepted subject to major corrections being made to the satisfaction of the Academic Board
d) That the thesis not be accepted, but be permitted to be revised and submitted for re-examination
e) The thesis not be accepted, and not be permitted to be submitted for re-examination.

3.6 Resubmission of a Thesis

Where, on the basis of the two examiners’ recommendations, the Chair of Examiners determines that the candidate not pass but be permitted to revise the thesis and submit it for re-examination, the following applies:

a) The thesis will normally be examined by the same examiners who did the initial examination
b) The candidate will be given no more than 12 months FTE to revise and resubmit. A candidate who does not re-submit their thesis within that period will be failed.
c) A thesis which is submitted for re-examination will be eligible to receive only the following grades: Accept, Accept with minor revisions, Fail.

3.7 Oral Defence

Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Ministry Studies will be invited by the Chair of Examiners to proceed to an oral defence of their thesis if, on the basis of the examination reports, the Chair believes that the degree is awardable.