1. **Rationale and Objectives**

1.1 The Research Essay provides training for students in development of research skills and tests their capacity to undertake research. It may serve as a pathway into higher degrees by research.

2. **Scope**

2.1 This policy applies to applicants for the Research Essay, to students admitted to a Research Essay and to their supervisors and examiners.

3. **Principles**

3.1 The University is committed to ensuring that its students have opportunity to develop and test their capacity for research.

3.2 The University ensures that students undertaking an initial piece of research in the form of a Research Essay receive effective support through supervision arrangements.

3.3 The University promotes quality in research and experience of peer review processes through a robust examination process for the Research Essay.

4. **Definitions**

4.1 A Research Essay is a substantial piece of work that provides a student with the opportunity to develop and test the capacity for research. The Research Essay:

   a) demonstrates a contribution to knowledge through investigation of its subject and the presentation of original research or independent analysis;

   b) is a Postgraduate Elective unit of study worth 30 points;

   c) is 12,000 words in length, inclusive of all elements except the bibliography;

   d) may be presented in a format other than a written essay but equivalent to it, provided that permission for an alternative form of presentation is sought and granted when the topic of the Research Essay is approved;

   e) is recorded on the student’s academic record as “Research Essay 12000 words”.

5. **Enrolment**
5.1 The Research Essay may be completed in a single semester or in two consecutive semesters.

5.2 The Research Essay may be taken as a single unit or as part of a postgraduate award.

5.3 A person may apply to a College of the University to enrol in the Research Essay if that person is eligible to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Divinity.

5.4 Permission to enrol in the Research Essay may be granted by a College of the University.

6. **Supervisor**

6.1 To be eligible for appointment as a supervisor of a Research Essay a person must:

a) hold a doctoral degree or have equivalent research experience; and

b) be active in research and publishing in, or otherwise make original contributions to, a relevant field or discipline.

6.2 The supervisor is responsible for:

a) designing the learning outcomes for the Research Essay;

b) meeting regularly with the student during enrolment in the Research Essay;

c) ensuring that the student is making satisfactory progress towards the approved learning outcomes for the Research Essay;

d) advising the Research Coordinator of the student’s home College immediately if there is any reason to believe the student is at risk of unsatisfactory progress.

6.3 If the supervisor is not a member of academic staff of the University of Divinity, the Research Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the supervisor understands the requirements of this Policy and is accountable to the University for its implementation.

6.4 The supervisor must meet with the candidate (whether face-to-face or by telephone, electronic, or other means) to discuss the candidate’s research project at least six times.

7. **Approval**

7.1 The student or applicant for the Research Essay is assisted by the Research Coordinator of a College in preparation of a topic and identification of a suitable supervisor who meets the requirements of this Policy.

7.2 The student must complete the Research Essay Approval Form in conjunction with the supervisor. The form must include an outline of the topic to be researched and propose measurable learning outcomes.

7.3 The Research Essay Approval Form must be lodged with the Research Office no later than the census date of the semester in which the essay is to be commenced. If the Research Essay Approval Form is not received by the census date, the student’s enrolment in the Research Essay may be cancelled by the Director of Research and any fees refunded.

7.4 On receipt of the Research Essay Approval Form, the Director of Research:
a) confirms the form is complete;
b) confirms the proposed supervisor meets the requirements of this Policy;
c) assigns the Research Essay Approval Form to a Deputy Chair of Examiners; and
d) forwards the form to that Deputy Chair of Examiners for approval or amendment.

7.5 Where the Director of Research or the Deputy Chair of Examiners proposes amendment of the Research Essay Approval Form, the Research Office liaises with the college Course Coordinator until the Director of Research and Deputy Chair of Examiners approve the proposed supervisor and topic.

7.6 The Research Office notifies the student, supervisor and College Registrar when the Research Essay has been approved, and notifies the Research Committee of the approved topic and the name of the student and approved supervisor.

8. Ethics Clearance

8.1 Where the Research Essay requires research involving human subjects, or material not in the public domain, the student must submit an application to the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencing research.

8.2 The Human Research Ethics Committee reviews the proposal through an expedited process conducted by the Director of Research and two other members of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

8.3 The outcome of an expedited process must be reported to the next meeting of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

9. Submission and Extensions

9.1 The Research Essay must be submitted to the Research Office no later than the last day of the examination period of the semester in which it is due.

9.2 The Research Essay must be submitted electronically as either a Word document or a PDF through the Research Essay unit in the Learning Management System (ARK).

9.3 A student enrolled in the Research Essay may apply in advance of the due date to the academic dean or equivalent of the home College for an extension of up to four weeks in accordance with University Policy on extensions.

9.4 If an extension is granted, the College must forward the details immediately to the Research Office.

9.5 A Research Essay without an approved extension that is submitted more than four weeks after the due date receives a Fail grade.

10. Examinations

10.1 The Director of Research appoints two persons as examiners of the Research Essay after consultation with the supervisor and a Deputy Chair of Examiners, provided that:

a) A student or supervisor may request in writing that a particular person not be appointed as an examiner;
b) the supervisor of a Research Essay may not be appointed as an examiner of that Research Essay;

c) at least one examiner must be a member of a College of the University that is not a College with which the student or supervisor is associated.

10.2 No examiner is permitted to communicate with the student or supervisor in relation to the examination during the examination process. If such communication occurs, the Director of Research may remove the examiner and appoint a new examiner.

10.3 One copy of the Research Essay is provided in confidence to each examiner together with the approved Research Essay Approval Form and a Research Essay Examination Report form. Each examiner must return the signed, completed Research Essay Examination Report to the Research Office within three weeks of receipt of the Research Essay.

10.4 If an examiner does not return a signed, completed Research Essay Examination Report to the Research Office within three weeks, then the Director of Research may dismiss the examiner and appoint a new examiner.

10.5 The Research Office forwards the completed Research Essay Examination Reports for each Research Essay to a Deputy Chair of Examiners who is responsible for determination of the final mark, provided that:

a) No essay may be failed unless failed by both examiners;

b) If the Deputy Chair of Examiners is unable to make a clear determination the Deputy Chair may ask the examiners to consult or ask the Director of Research to appoint an additional examiner;

c) If the two examiners’ marks are two grade bands or more apart, the Director of Research must appoint a third examiner who is external to the College of the University with which the student, supervisor, and both previous examiners are associated.

10.6 Where an additional or third examiner is appointed, that examiner’s report is forwarded to the Deputy Chair of Examiners who then determines the final result of the Research Essay. The Deputy Chair of Examiners has discretion in such cases to determine which of the examiners’ reports are to be released to the student.

10.7 The Chair of Examiners must convene a meeting of the Deputy Chairs of Examiners once in each examination period for the purpose of comparison and moderation of results of Research Essays. The meeting may amend the result of a Research Essay to ensure consistency of examination and grading of assessment, provided that the requirements of section 10.5 of this Policy are met.

10.8 On completion of the examination, the Research Office forwards the final mark (and no other) and approved examiners’ reports to the student, supervisor, Research Coordinator and Registrar of the student’s College. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, this is to occur no later than the date on the University Calendar on which results are released to students for that semester.
10.9 A student may appeal the result of a Research Essay in accordance with the provisions of the University's Appeals Policy.

10.10 A student who has successfully completed a Research Essay may lodge an electronic copy of the Research Essay in the University’s Research Repository.

11. **Fees and payments**

11.1 The student tuition fee for the Research Essay is collected by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.

11.2 Payments to Colleges, libraries, and examiners are distributed by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor from the student tuition fee according to the formula and schedule used for higher degrees by research.

11.3 Colleges are responsible for arranging payment, where appropriate, of supervisors of Research Essays.

12. **Schedules**

12.1 Schedule A to this Policy is the Research Essay Approval Form which may be approved or amended by the Director of Research.

12.2 Schedule B to this Policy is the Research Essay Examination Report Form which may be approved or amended by the Director of Research.

13. **Date of next review**

13.1 This policy must be reviewed no later than 31 December 2020.