

+MONASH UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS

**GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISION AND EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH UNITS
IN COURSEWORK DEGREES**

1. Units that consist of a research project are normally taken over one semester. A 12 point unit normally requires a submission that is 9,000 words in length, however students are advised to complete between 10-12,000 words if they wish to apply for a research degree. A 24 point research project normally requires 18,000 words.
2. Candidates should discuss the selection of a supervisor with the course coordinator. Choice of supervisor would normally be based on the closeness their area of expertise to the topic of research.
3. Approval to enrol in the unit should not be granted unless the proposed supervisor has a reasonable expectation that the student is capable of the independent research required.
4. Clear guidelines must exist for each unit with regard to the process for the approval of a topic, the assessment, the expected organisational layout of the final paper, the word limit (including, for example, how appendices will be treated) and submission deadlines.
5. The supervisor should be in regular contact with the students under his/her supervision, with a minimum of three consultation sessions, the first being no later than the first week of semester. Ideally, meetings would occur once every two weeks. For the most part contact should be on a face to face basis, but where circumstances do not permit this contact via email or by phone is acceptable.
6. The supervisor should provide adequate guidance to his/her students. This should include providing advice on the following: fine-tuning the topic, identifying important theoretical and conceptual issues, finding appropriate literature and electronic resources, structuring the argument and constructive criticism of work submitted by the student. At a later stage the supervisor is also expected to provide editorial advice on student drafts. The supervisor is not, however, responsible for the content of the work and s/he is not responsible for any grammatical or typographical errors that it might contain.
7. Students should be encouraged to make written submissions of the project aims, methods and outlines of the final paper at appropriate stages of the work, rather than only relying on discussion of progress with the supervisor.
8. The supervisor should keep notes on conversations with his/her students so that student progress can be monitored.
9. The supervisor should return corrected drafts promptly; with a turn around time not exceeding two weeks.
10. Students who are undertaking 24 point research projects are doing research of a magnitude similar to that in Honours degrees or Masters Qualifying with a research component. These students should, therefore, be incorporated into the processes that the School has in place to support research at Honours/ postgraduate level.
11. A 12 point research paper will normally require only one examiner (who has not been involved in the supervision of the project). However the supervisor has the option of requesting a second examiner if the result is unexpected, or if the student is applying for a scholarship for a research degree and requires two written reports from examiners who have not been involved in the supervision. [if deemed necessary by the supervisor an external examiner may be appointed]

12. In the case of a 24 point research project, the final paper should be examined by two academics, at least one of whom has not been involved in supervision of the project. Because 24 point papers often serve to evaluate a student's capacity for independent research, there should be two written reports from examiners who have not been involved in the supervision. The final mark would normally be an average of the two unless there is a significant discrepancy. In this case, either negotiation between examiners or adjudication by a third member of staff is required.
13. Examiners' reports should give a balanced summation of the work and not labour the inadequacies of the paper.
14. All Research projects, both 12 and 24 credit points, require Monash ethics approval if they involve 'human participation or definable human involvement and [have] a purpose of establishing facts, principles or knowledge or ...obtaining or confirming knowledge'.¹ Schools are advised to obtain Ethics approval for research project units. Full Ethics approvals should be sought for specific projects where the supervisor/Graduate Co-ordinator considers the topic to be particularly sensitive. Academic staff are advised to obtain advice from the Human Ethics Officer in the Research Grants and Ethics Branch about whether the project requires full Ethics approval and expedited review.

Off-campus students will be required to comply with whatever arrangements have been made for suitable contact with their supervisors. Where deemed viable, this may involve some face-to-face contact with academic staff. All students should ensure that they utilise the clearly defined and agreed upon mode of regular contact and provision of feedback on their written drafts, as advised in relevant course/unit materials.

15. In the case of off-campus students, suitable arrangements (where physically possible) must be made for some face-to-face contact with academic staff as well as a clearly defined and agreed upon mode of regular contact and provision of feedback on students' written drafts. These arrangements should be written into any relevant course/unit materials.
For those students for whom face-to-face contact is not physically viable, a clearly defined and agreed upon mode of regular contact and provision of feedback on written drafts. These arrangements should be written into any relevant course/unit materials.

Any exemptions from these arrangements may be granted in special circumstances only by the PGCC upon request from the course coordinator.

¹ National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans – June 1999, p.7 'What a Human Research Ethics Committee should review'