# DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (AQF LEVEL 10 DOCTORAL DEGREE, COURSE CODE 199)

## Course Rationale

The Doctor of Philosophy degree is designed for candidates who have a prior degree in theology or in a field other than theology.

The degree is designed to allow candidates whose academic background is in fields other than traditionally related to theology to pursue research in their primary field of research and integrate their research with knowledge from various Christian traditional theological disciplines.

The degree will equip men and women as beginning researchers in a broad range of fields of study related to the humanities and social sciences and provide a qualification recognised by theological and Bible colleges as well as universities for those who teach in these fields.

## Admission Requirements

Candidates must either be a graduate of one of the following awards of the ACT or possess a qualification which, in the opinion of the Research and Research Studies Committee, is of equivalent research degree status.

Candidates proposing to complete a research thesis in unit fields LA, OT, NT and TH must meet the same Biblical Languages qualifications as required of those applying for admission to the Doctor of Theology:

- (a) Bachelor of Theology (Honours) with First Class or 2A Honours OR
- (b) Bachelor of Ministry (Honours) with First Class or 2A Honours OR
- (c) Master of Theology (Research) OR
- (d) Master of Arts (Theology) including a Distinction in a minimum 8cps research project and a 3.0 GPA overall, and completed 8cp in Biblical Languages and 8cps in Biblical Language Exegesis at undergraduate level, if seeking to complete a thesis in the unit fields LA, OT, NT and TH.

Those candidates who do not meet the minimum biblical languages requirement and are seeking to undertake research in the unit fields CH, PE, EM, PC and DM will need to demonstrate to the Research and Research Studies Committee that the biblical language requirements are not required.

OR

- (e) Master of Arts (Ministry) with a Distinction in a minimum 8cps research project and a 3.0 GPA overall, and completed 8cp in Biblical Languages and 8cps in Biblical Language Exegesis at undergraduate level, if seeking to complete a thesis in the unit fields LA, OT, NT and TH.

Those candidates who do not meet the minimum biblical languages requirement and are seeking to undertake research in the unit fields CH, PE, EM, PC and DM will need to demonstrate to the Research and Research Studies Committee that the biblical language requirements are not required.

- (f) Master of Divinity with an overall GPA of at least 3.0, including a Distinction in a minimum 8cps MA level project (**750 or **790)
- (g) Any other qualification deemed equivalent in level and standing to the above qualifications from the field of theology or another field of study.

## Language Qualifications for Non-English Speaking Background Applicants (NESB)

NESB applicants who (a) have an assessable qualification that was undertaken solely in English in one of a set of prescribed countries OR (b) who have been resident in Australia with English being the language spoken at home and at work for ten (10) or more years are NOT required to provide proof of English Language proficiency for consideration for admission to an ACT course. All other applicants MUST provide proof of English Language proficiency for consideration for admission to an ACT course. Such proof will be by provision of the results of an IELTS test (Academic Version) or its recognised equivalent.

For admission to the Doctor of Philosophy, the minimum IELTS result required is 7.5 overall with a minimum of 7.5 in reading and writing, 7.0 in listening and 6.5 in speaking.

## Course Structure

The minimum duration of PhD candidature is three years (6 semesters), and the maximum duration of PhD candidature is 6 years (12 semesters).

Higher Degree Research candidates may not be granted more than two (2) semesters of suspension of candidature during the term of their candidature, and may be granted no more than two semesters of extension of candidature prior to the examination phase of their candidature. The R&RSC will accept applications for suspension beyond the two semester limit on a case by case basis only for extraordinary circumstances, supported with written evidence.
Learning Outcomes

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy (AQF level 10) is a research doctorate equivalent to an Australian University PhD. It is awarded on the basis of the satisfactory completion of a thesis. The thesis must make an original contribution to the relevant field of knowledge, integrating Christian theological perspectives and show evidence of original research and the exercise of independent critical analysis. Although a candidate works under a supervisor, the candidate is expected to demonstrate independence of thought.

The award of the degree may be taken to certify that a candidate has been trained in the techniques relevant to the field of research, and is capable, without supervision, of applying these techniques to other research projects, and has become sufficiently familiar with a significant area of discipline within which the candidate has worked to be able to assess critically the present state of knowledge in the subject and to conceive original possibilities for further investigation with an increasing independence.

(i) The thesis must embody the results of independent scholarship and research. It may be either a critical and analytical study of existing material or, as is more usual, an original contribution to the subject. In either case it must show evidence of originality and independence of thought, posing a new insight into the topic or formulating an existing issue in a novel and useful way.

(ii) The candidate must demonstrate that he or she is aware of, understands, and is able to read and analyse the literature—including primary source and scholarly material in languages other than English—that is directly relevant to the topic as well as related areas of significance, and is able to make considered judgments.

(iii) The thesis must be a work of appropriate literary standard. While assessing what constitutes a “distinct contribution to theological learning” is no easy matter, one way of gauging whether a candidate’s work meets the criterion is to consider the extent to which the thesis is publishable. Criteria that will help decide whether a thesis is publishable are:

- there is emerging and/or growing interest in the subject area of the thesis such that the thesis, if published, would complement what has been published already, or, the thesis makes a radically new contribution to the subject area;
- the thesis is well-written, its ideas are accessible, and it would lend itself to easy conversion to published format;
- there are well-known, international scholars who could be advocates for the published version of the thesis.

In the following domains, Graduates of the Doctor of Philosophy will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding
1. Demonstrate substantial expert knowledge at the frontier of a field of learning in Theology, Ministry or Christian Studies;
2. Evaluate the various research principles and methodologies of the field of learning;

Inquiry and Analysis
3. Assess the received body of knowledge in the field of learning with a view to identifying areas that require further research;

Problem Solving and Integration
4. Formulate problems and questions, assemble data and literature, construct a theoretical and methodological framework, develop coherent evidence-based perspectives as the basis of independent expert inquiry;

Research
5. Design and execute an independent investigation leading to an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field of learning;
6. Demonstrate understanding of and compliance with ethical matters related to human participant research;

Communication
7. Present theoretical bases, methodologies and results of research to, and engage with, non-specialists, peers and the scholarly community;
8. Present research in writing suitable for publication, including a thesis of 80,000-100,000 words or portfolio of published work;

Teamwork and Professional Practice
9. As a leader and in groups, apply expert authoritative knowledge and understanding to ministry contexts and the wider community;

Engagement with the World
10. Bring authoritative expert professional capacity to engagement with the challenges of contemporary Christianity, society and the wider world;

Continuous Learning and Development
11. Demonstrate capacity independently and collaboratively to generate new knowledge and understanding by original research.
## Rules

All candidates initially have provisional status. Candidates must satisfactorily complete all Confirmation of Candidature requirements by the end of their first full time year (or part time equivalent) of candidacy to progress to full candidate status.

Candidates and their supervisors must complete and submit the Higher Degree by Research Annual Progress Report to the Research Student Administrator of the ACT via the postgraduate coordinator in the candidate’s supervising college by the due date. Where unsatisfactory progress is reported the Research and Research Studies Committee may require the candidate to ‘show cause’ why candidature should not be terminated.

It is the candidate’s responsibility to be aware of and fully comply with all rules and regulations related to the Doctor of Philosophy.

The candidates must be aware of the prescribed word limit for PhD theses. Theses must be at least 80,000 and no more than 100,000 words in length. See Guidelines for Theses in the ACT Higher Degree by Research Handbook.

Candidates should expect to submit to the supervisor coherent accounts of the research to date according to an agreed schedule.

Personal contact is preferable to merely submitting work by mail, especially if candidate and supervisor are situated in the same state of Australia. At least three annual face-to-face meetings per year are recommended. Supervisors are to submit an Annual Progress Report to the candidate’s supervising college which will forward the report to the Associate Dean of the ACT. If a candidate’s progress is considered to be unsatisfactory the Research and Research Studies Committee will advise the candidate and their supervisor their status is under review. Where a second unsatisfactory report is received the Research and Research Studies Committee may require the candidate to ‘show cause’ why their candidature should not be terminated.

Candidates should accept responsibility for maintaining negotiated regular communication with the supervisor and the progress of research agreed upon. If impediments arise, these should be immediately discussed with the supervisor.

Under exceptional circumstances, the Research and Research Studies Committee may vary the period of candidature.

For candidates who started the Master of Theology degree before February 2015 and transfer from the Master of Theology to a doctoral degree the time enrolled in the research component, but not the time spent enrolled in any coursework units of study, of the MTh will be deducted from the time allowed for the doctoral candidature.

For candidates admitted to the Master of Theology degree from February 2015, conditions apply as to the eligibility to apply for transfer to doctoral awards, and for those who are transferred to a doctoral award there are variations regarding reduction of time in the doctoral program. Candidates who are eligible to apply for leave to transfer to a doctoral award will be informed of the conditions in their letter of offer and acceptance at the time of admission to the Master of Theology programs.

Candidates who transferred from MTh to PhD must complete all confirmation of candidature requirements for the PhD within the first 12 months (or part-time equivalent) of candidature.

Once a candidate has transferred he or she shall not lodge their PhD thesis within (i) a minimum of 12 months full time equivalent from the date of transfer, and (ii) a minimum of 2 years full time equivalent from the original date of enrolment in the MTh.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(i) Demonstration of original research and advanced knowledge in a specialised area of the discipline of theology that is examined externally against international standards;

(ii) Demonstration of a high order of skill analysis, critical evaluation and/or the professional application in an extended piece of research that exhibits a high level of originality and quality in the comprehension and evaluation of new information, concepts and evidence encountered both in primary sources and also the secondary literature arising out of scholarly reflection in a specialised area of one or more of the major disciplines of theology;

(iii) Demonstration of a high order of skill in analysis and critical evaluation transferred from less extensive research at Honours and/or Masters level in the discipline of theology or related disciplines and showing evidence of the ability to synthesise knowledge and think independently.

ARTICULATION ARRANGEMENTS

Principles

(i) Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) applications for admission to the course (or applications for transfer of credit for any coursework envisaged by the prospective candidate) will be dealt with initially by approved colleges and then by the Dean of the ACT before final approval is granted by the Research and Research Studies Committee. Applications for credit based on recognition of prior learning will be considered in accordance with the guidelines published in “National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)” (AQF, 2007).

(ii) The ACT regards the qualifications awarded by the member colleges of the Council of Deans of Theology as equivalent to its own, assuming that prerequisites for entry to an ACT award are met.

(iii) The ACT regards accredited degrees in theology and ministry awarded by registered providers in Australia as equivalent to its own degrees assuming that prerequisites for entry to an ACT award are met.

ASSUMED KNOWLEDGE

Each candidate enrolled in the PhD is required to have demonstrated promise in conducting research in their designated area of study in the MTh or Honours thesis or in the 16 cp coursework masters project.

ETHICS CLEARANCE

The ACT office convenes an Ethics Committee which has particular responsibility for the endorsement of human participant research proposals. Any PhD candidate who proposed to undertake human participant research as part of their methodology must seek clearance from the Ethics Committee before proceeding. Details on submission dates and application forms can be found on the ACT website at


PROGRESS

(i) Once the thesis proposal has been accepted candidature must be confirmed by the Research and Research Studies Committee by the end of the first year.

(ii) Annual reports completed by each research candidate and his/her supervisor are submitted to the ACT’s postgraduate administrator through the affiliated college’s postgraduate coordinator by 11 December each year. The report provides a check on the progress of the research undertaken by the candidate and on the quality and frequency of meetings between the supervisor and candidate. Perceived difficulties and problems are communicated to the supervisor and the candidate. In more serious cases, problems surfacing during the time of candidature are brought to the attention of the Research and Research Studies Committee.

(iii) Lack of progress may lead to cancellation of candidature.

Appeals

If a candidate is not awarded the HDR degree in which he/she is enrolled he/she may wish to appeal. Candidates are referred to the Policy on Candidate Appeals under Research Degree Rules listed on the ACT website.

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