Dancing between diversity and consistency: Refining assessment in postgraduate degrees in dance

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Dancing between Diversity and Consistency:
Refining Assessment in Postgraduate Degrees in Dance

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2008 www.dancingbetweendiversity.com
Guidelines for best practice in Australian Doctoral and Masters by Research Examination, encompassing the two primary modes of investigation, written and multi-modal theses, their distinctiveness and their potential interplay.
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DANCING BETWEEN DIVERSITY AND CONSISTENCY:
IMPROVING ASSESSMENT IN POST GRADUATE DEGREES IN DANCE

AIMS TO REFINE A CODE OF ASSESSMENT FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES IN DANCE IN AUSTRALIA
ENCOMPASSING THE TWO PRIMARY MODES OF INVESTIGATION, WRITTEN AND MULTI-MODAL THeses, THEIR
DISTINCTIVENESS AND THEIR POTENTIAL INTERPLAY

FOREWORD

When the Australian Learning and Teaching Council accepted our dance-oriented proposal dancing between diversity
and consistency, my colleagues and I were astounded. That initial valuing and subsequent support of our potential
input as dancers to higher degree assessment cannot be under-estimated. More than the studied details of
recommendations presented in this ‘guidelines for best practice’ and the perplexities of moving between multiple
bodies and their voices, it is that act of faith in our capacity to contribute to the practices of learning and teaching that
stands as an exemplar of the inclusive energies circulating in education that are meaningful and enduring. On this level,
our debt to ALTC is a future to be repaid in dancing, literally and metaphorically.

We set out to consider multiplicities, to take into account the perspectives of networks in which professional
aspirations intersect with academia. If dance knowledge/s were to be valued, we knew we had to enlist the support of
many sectors: dance academics who practise and write, research assistants who understood the intersections of those
two modalities, as well as the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia (TDCA), the Australian Dance Council (Ausdance), and
affiliated international associations like the World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific Chapter (WDAAP). Additionally, we
engaged two experts in the field, Associate Professor Allyson Holbrook (education research) and Professor Susan
Melrose (UK specialist in multi-modal degrees). Such a diversity of possible perspectives may not augur well for the
desired consistency of the project, but the range delivered a variety of responses to illuminate and complicate what
might be our current position on assessment of higher degrees in dance.

What is crucial to emphasise in the recommendations and discussions that follow is that we offer a view from a
particular moment in time, condensed perspectives that relate to the ‘now’, but are offered with a consciousness that
the whole question of knowledge, especially at the higher degree level, is dynamic. Discovery dances: that is its
purpose.

I am indebted my colleagues, to those who supported, gave willingly of their time and contributed so much positive
energy to this project. People’s generosity suggests that there will be bountiful diversity fused with consistency within
acts of evaluation and affirmation to come.

Maggi Phillips
December 2008
The project began with questions:

What is/are the function/s of higher degree dance research?

How can ‘master-ness’ and ‘doctorateness’ be defined? evaluated?

What languages, structures and processes exist to guide candidates, supervisors, examiners and research personnel?

What is the purpose of evaluation/examination?

What might the positive attributes of degree examination be? How can they be enhanced?

What inadequacies/inconsistencies impede examination?

How can academic/professional, writing/dancing, tradition/creation and diversity/consistency relationships be fostered and 'educated' to embrace change?

Such questions acted as the gravitational philosophy beneath the project’s pragmatic structure and continue to exert pressure at this juncture of the project’s own evaluation. This mini ‘thesis’ of ours will be subject to scrutiny by multitudes of examiners/readers, each one of whom is qualified to respond and therein become a force in the dynamic interplay of evaluation and the search for answers to difficult yet crucial questions.

Now to the solid grounds of process.

The collaborative, qualitative research project between three universities was conducted over a two year period in 2007-2008 with the support of a Priority Projects Program grant from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. In 2007, chief investigators, Dr Maggi Phillips (Edith Cowan University, the lead institution), Associate Professor Cheryl Stock (Queensland University of Technology) and Associate Professor Kim Vines (Deakin University), with research assistants, Jonathan Mustard (Perth), Dr Maria Adriana Verdaasdonk (Brisbane) and Dr Katrina Rank (Melbourne), interviewed 74 people across five states. The interviews recorded the responses of 40 examiners, seven deans and directors, three administrators and 32 candidates and graduates of higher degrees in dance and arts-related disciplines.

Each interviewee was given a pre-interview survey to complete, which provided some statistical data. The actual interview questions were open-ended, designed to solicit interviewees’ perspectives and experiences. Up to 26 questions were asked in each interview, which lasted from 30 minutes to one hour. Examiners, deans, administrators and candidates and graduates were asked different sets of questions about their experience of higher degrees in dance and/or related creative arts disciplines.

The project began in February 2007 with preliminary discussions between the chief Investigators and two days of intensive workshop sessions with an educational consultant, Associate Professor Allyson Holbrook and coopted Perth advisors. This consultative process determined the set of questions for each target group, methods for data handling and analysis and a range of issues relating to ethics clearance, extant guidelines, assessment literature and forums. The team embarked on two parallel methods of soliciting perceptions and experiences; face-to-face interviews with participants from the academic community and open Ausdance (The Australian Dance Council) forums where the focus was on how the dance profession viewed the function of dance research. Interviews and forums continued throughout the year, concentrating on Australian capital cities where higher degrees in dance are offered. Seven interviews were conducted via email. Face-to-face interviews were the preferred method so that a richer set of responses could be
captured through conversations that could include supplementary requests for clarification and what became recognised as emergent data.

Interview transcription was undertaken by the research assistants in the three institutional settings and was completed by early 2008. The transcriptions were imported into NVivo™ in blocks of five to ten (NVivo™ is a text management database program designed especially for qualitative data analysis). Responses were ‘coded’ to the questions and respondents’ personal attributes were tabulated. The process of database coding was undertaken centrally, by the research assistant in Perth. The coding and tabulation enabled the investigators to search the database according to participant attribute, interview question or various combinations of the two. Further coding was undertaken once the initial analysis was completed, revealing the most prominent themes. This further coding enabled a greater range of statistical data to emerge, exposing the frequency of themes and the groups and sub-groups most concerned with particular themes, perceptions and experiences.

Simultaneously, a ‘manual’ analysis of interviewees’ responses in relation to small sets of questions (affectionately known as ‘chunks’) was conducted with each investigator responsible for analysing a particular group (supervisors/examiners dance; supervisors/examiners non-dance; candidates/graduates and research deans/administrators). These ‘chunk’ analyses (for instance on the ‘value of higher degrees in dance’ and ‘what is the relation between the written and the practice’) were triangulated by comparing the main responses to arise from each role grouping and additional matrix-like summaries constructed by the research assistants from the statistical data. Forum responses were also incorporated into the culminating summaries where pertinent. Triangulation refers to a method of analysis verification where one analyst’s results are compared with others by a three-way process to check parities/disparities. Most analytical differences in the triangulation process arose less from a difference in the actual themes identified than from how they might be interpreted and grouped for optimal effect. Summaries were also compared against current literature, extant codes, guidelines and documented procedures of universities offering creative arts degrees. Various workshops and forums conducted by ALTC additionally exposed the researchers to assessment issues across the wide span of learning and teaching and, together with countless informal discussions, kept the complex forces of diversity alive and well.

A draft code, Recommendations for Best Practice in Doctoral and Masters by Research Examination of Dance Studies in Australia, was formulated based on the generic guidelines for doctoral examination produced by the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies, August 2005 and was launched at the World Dance Alliance Global Summit held in Brisbane in July of 2008, and subsequently distributed for comment and feedback to as wide an audience as possible. Responses from academics and artists in the field enabled researchers to refine or re-consider various issues arising from the draft and a principal evaluative thrust came from independent, international consultant to the project, Professor Susan Melrose (Middlesex University, UK). Attention to nomenclature, considerations of writing in relation to practitioner researchers and suggestions about the benefits of the UK protocol of the viva voce constituted Melrose’s main additions to the draft code and academic papers generated by the group.

The investigation’s culmination is this booklet, a website (www.dancingbetweeniversity.com) and a determination to keep the unresolved issues of higher degree examination flowing in a dynamic system of ongoing refinement. After all, this project is about the restless knowledge/s of dance and dancers, their commentators and makers and their ‘emergent premises’ ever in creation.
GUIDELINES FOR BEST PRACTICE IN AUSTRALIAN DOCTORAL AND MASTERS BY RESEARCH EXAMINATION

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS FOR DANCE

Below is a summary of disciplinary specific recommendations for dance studies, encompassing both the more traditional written theses as well as theses directly involved in practice (multi-modal research).

There are many variants to research which involves material practices in the arts—practice-led research, practice-based, performance as research and artistic research—but for the purposes of this document multi-modal research embraces all those variants on the understanding that candidates will articulate the specificities according to their particular research design framework/methodological approach (refer p.15).

DANCING BETWEEN DIVERSITY AND CONSISTENCY:

While consistency is a staple requirement for formulated codes of practice, the researchers are mindful that consistency must work in partnership with diversity. The recommendations are an attempt to underline this crucial partnership, constructing guidelines for candidates, examiners, supervisors and research personnel without foreclosing alternatives which may arise in the processes of discovery in, through and about the practices of dance.

Our intention is to be inclusive of all research theses pertaining to dance, however, the relative newness of multi-modal forms and the challenges that they pose to examination procedures present specific issues for attention. This emphasis is a response to current circumstances and does not, in any respect, privilege one mode over another.

FUNDAMENTAL FORMATS FOUND IN HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH STUDIES IN DANCE:

- Multi-modal theses whose principal output is creative practice (choreography/performance): (refer p.17)
  
  These studies in and through the practices/materiality of dance usually culminate in a performance (or series of performances or digital/rich media art works) together with a contextual/conceptual written component.

- Multi-modal theses whose principal focus is process/es: (refer p.21)
  
  These studies in and through the practices/materiality of dance will usually culminate in a demonstration of the process/es in question either in 'live' or documented formats (or a combination of both) together with a contextual/conceptual written component.

- Written theses grounded in the discipline of dance:
  
  These studies about the practices of dance principally focus on dance and the theoretical tenets of its physicality and may also make use of the methodologies and theoretical underpinnings of a specific practice approach or a mixture of approaches with and from related disciplinary areas.

- Written theses grounded in another discipline but featuring the presence of dance in some way:
  
  These studies will vary in the degree of attention given to dance/dancing and usually be grounded firmly within the methodologies and theoretical underpinnings of the other discipline/s.

1 Bracketed numbers indicate the page for more detailed accounts of these points whether in accompanying papers or to the dance-adjusted guidelines for doctoral examination modelled on the generic guidelines produced by Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGS).
DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF DANCE RESEARCH

ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

One of the most difficult aspects of assessment for dance studies located in artistic practices is the issue of creativity. Here, diversity inevitably rules, at least within those layers of the study in which imaginative processes operate.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ARTISTIC CREATIVITY INCLUDE (BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO):

- 'Singular knowledge': Creative practices are emergent and present single rich studies contributing to knowledge;
- Open-ended, paradoxical and ambiguous: While the artwork may be characteristically open-ended, the researcher needs to articulate the value of resultant multiple or undefinable outcomes;
- Metaphorical and inter-textual: the encoded and embodied nature of creative outputs provides its own discourse. Textual 'translation' through metaphor and allusion may be used to illuminate the practice;
- Practitioner mastery projecting forward: in contrast to retrospective analysis (written), the artist researcher projects forward through 'transformative events' in the production of knowledge (practice); and
- Dynamic creative intellectual endeavour: Theory occurs across/arises from all modes of research whether in practice/s or in writing (refer p.17).

POINTS OF EMPHASIS FOR DANCE STUDIES

A THESIS IS:

a substantial and intellectually coherent product or products in one or more media; comprising of a written dissertation or creative work/s and integral text for submission to external examination.

The dance discipline conforms to the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies’ (DDOGS) recommendations for best practice and highlights the following as specifically appropriate to the discipline.

GENERAL ELEMENTS OF THESIS PRESENTATION INCLUDE:

- Different voices/languages, including kinetic languages, to convey the intention or argument of the investigation providing the language/s appropriately convey the conceptual level of disciplinary knowledge;
- A level of technical delivery/mastery of performance, process demonstration or artwork that is coherent with the medium/media of presentation; and an articulated research design framework of the study;
- A final documentation of performance and/or process of sufficient quality for examiners to recall the 'live' thesis components or to be the artefact in itself (refer p.28);
- Collaborative investigations where roles and responsibilities must be clearly delineated; and
- Only those artefacts and processes produced specifically for the MA/doctoral degree can be examined.
A THESIS IS SHAPED BY ITS RESEARCH DESIGN (refer p.15).  

Research design involving dance practice is an emerging field and frequently stems from approaches specific to the practice. Each multi-modal project therefore should present a developed and comprehensive research design, which clearly defines the use of practice in research.

FOR ALL THESES, A RESEARCH DESIGN FRAMEWORK SHOULD INCLUDE:

- A clear articulation of the role of dance practice in the generation of new knowledge in relation to the study;
- Conceptual understanding of the methodology/ies employed, whether drawing on extant theory such as phenomenology, feminist readings, action research, grounded theory and so forth or constructing a hybrid methodology to frame a specific study; and
- Cohesion of interdisciplinary relationships wherein the role of dance is aligned with the conventions of the related disciplines be they historical, anthropological, medical and so forth.

ADDITIONALLY ‘EMERGENT’ MULTI-MODAL RESEARCH DESIGNS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- A demonstration of the interrelationships between dance performance/process and written text in developing the findings of the research; and
- A clear articulation of the status and intrinsic theoretical position of examined artefacts and/or processes which may involve a bricolage approach but is required to be consistent with the practice concerned.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PRACTICAL AND WRITTEN COMPONENTS FOR EXAMINATION

- Practice and writing are integrated and interdependent components of a single thesis as such coherence, rather than designated weightings, is the guiding principle of the relationship;
- Theory and creativity may arise within both practice and writing (refer p.23);
- The writing should reflect upon, contextualise and conceptualise the thesis work pertinent to the disciplinary specific methodology/ies employed; both components are likely to reference professional, as well as academic, conventions (refer p.24);
- Subject to institutional variations, a reasonable time lapse between exposure of examiners to the two components is considered to be up to six months to avoid disadvantaging the candidate; and
- Candidates are encouraged to include process traces or ephemera such as choreographic notes, design sketches, digital documentation of pivotal rehearsal experiences, music scores/notes, journal excerpts etc, situated to indicate the directions/decision-making of the research journey (refer p.28).

PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT - SPECIAL CASE MULTI-MODAL EXAMINATION

- It is recommended that audience presence is a natural environment for performance and thus crucial to examination (refer p.25);
- A ‘framing’ document, outlining the research questions or area of investigation, intentions and processes of the study is crucial to the performance/process examination. Interpretations/ideas may shift in intervening reflective processes - and be articulated in the writing - but the ‘original premise’ of the research in practice
plays a vital role in the examiners' initial assessment of the effectiveness and significance of the ‘live’ component/s;

- All examiners are expected to attend the performance if ‘liveness’ is integral to the study; and

- To overcome resource limitations, high quality (digital) documentation may be acceptable as a representation of the ‘live’ component/s for one international examiner on a case-by-case basis.

EXAMINER ATTRIBUTES INCLUDE:

- Ability to be fair and assess work against the work’s stated criteria; and with regard for the local/global contextualisation of the work;

- Capacity to be conceptually discriminating and intellectually flexible;

- Expert knowledge of the practice/s and/or area of research;

- Demonstration of a collegially supportive attitude and enthusiasm for innovation and risk-taking;

- Time and self-reflexive commitment to consider the work thoroughly;

- Commitment to independent assessment and professional etiquette especially in live performance/process viewing contexts; and

- Multi-modal degrees highlight the relationship between academia and the professional dance industry, making a case for the integration of expert practitioners from the industry to examine in parallel with doctoral or masters-qualified examiners (refer p.27).

CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE

While maintaining the principle of independent assessment without direct contact with candidates, supervisors and examining colleagues, examiners are encouraged to play a dynamic role within the process of evaluation. Each thesis should present a unique demonstration of diversity-in-relation-with-consistency and an examiner’s role is to recognise and evaluate the interplay of those relationships against the multiple facets of disciplinary knowledge (refer p.17).

AT A MASTERS LEVEL, BREADTH IS THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE. CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD INCLUDE:

- Demonstration of comprehensive disciplinary knowledge/mastery across all modes of the thesis;

- Engagement with the literature and/or the work of others as is coherent for the study;

- Conceptual grasp of methodologies and/or processes of creation;

- Capacity for independent, coherent and critical thinking;

- Coherence of its experimental design, arguments/interrogations, production style and conclusions (multi-modal);

- Research process and outcomes are perceptible within the practice/s (multi-modal);
Quality of presentation, its technical accomplishments taking into consideration the limits of production resources and extra-ordinary features (multi-modal); and

Evidence of embodied experiential investigation and communication (multi-modal).

AT A DOCTORAL LEVEL, DEPTH AND ORIGINALITY ARE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES. CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD INCLUDE:

Originality of the contribution to knowledge in the field: its aesthetic insight, publishability, performative-ness, applicability, and (potential) impact;

Deep and nuanced engagement with disciplinary literature and/or works of others as is coherent for the study;

Incisive conceptual grasp of investigative methodologies and/or processes of creation (multi-modal);

Capacity for independent, critical thinking shown through the work’s insights into the conceptual and/or theoretical underpinning of the discipline;

Coherence and innovativeness of its experimental design, arguments/interrogations and conclusions;

Research process and outcomes are perceptible within the practice/s as appropriate to the high level, depth and nuance of the investigation (multi-modal);

Quality of presentation, its technical accomplishments, detail and dynamics taking into consideration the limits of production resources and extra-ordinary features (multi-modal);

Evidence of original embodied investigation and communicative sophistication (multi-modal); and

Evidence of disciplinary leadership attributes in the resourcefulness of the research.

Please note that the time duration of artwork/s and word length of the written components in multi-modal theses should be consistent with the different duration of masters and doctoral candidatures. However, while taking into account reasonable relationships with an institution’s maximum specifications, duration and length should be gauged primarily on demonstrating the significance of the study (multi-modal).

EXAMINERS’ REPORTS:

Examiners are encouraged to address the formative as well as summative functions of their reports;

While mindful of resource constraints, the examiner may, on clearly justified grounds, suggest revisions to the practice component/s as is the case with fully written theses, to ensure that the standard of the practice is commensurate with other components of the thesis (multi-modal); and

In multi-modal degrees, examiners should be encouraged to devote equal attention and reportage to the practice/s and to the candidate’s integration of practice and writing for conceptual purposes (multi-modal).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXAMINER TRAINING:

Training and/or in-service programmes for examiners be provided as part of on-going supervisor training programs;
Examination effectiveness be developed through strategies like local and national symposia for dialogue and expertise sharing between examiner/supervisors and postgraduate candidates, particularly in regards to multi-modal degrees; and

Strategies to involve expert industry practitioners in examination processes in multi-modal degrees.

**ONGOING CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS**

*Embodied knowledge of a practice provides the kinds of insights (from the 'inside') that cannot necessarily be gleaned from solely theoretical investigations (from the 'outside'). The advantage to PhD/post doc research undertaken through practice is that the embodied knowledge gained through practical research can give rise to new insights that can both lead to new directions in theoretical investigations of a practice, and give new 'colour' to any theories under investigation. The latter is recognised by neuro-scientists/physiologists as a viable way of researching ideas.* (research director/supervisor/examiner interview - QOt01)

Although cognisant of the fact that financial resources are shrinking rather than expanding, and understanding that the proposed guidelines will work best as a relatively pragmatic document, it is nevertheless essential that we highlight some of the current impediments to successfully implementing certain significant guiding principles of this code of practice. These include, but are not limited to, the following (some of which are discussed in more detail in other sections of this publication):

- Alternative entry pathways for multi-modal theses (refer p.22);

- Allocation of - or assistance to locate - discipline-specific resources such as suitable and available studio space and equipment, production resources and collaborating artists and performers of the required standard and experience. This may occur through partnerships with industry as well through research funding;

- Resources to enable examiners to travel nationally to see live performances where this is an essential part of the study and high quality digital documentation as alternative solutions for international examiners;

- Development of examination panels through depth of knowledge (industry) as well as through breadth and interconnectedness of knowledge (relationships with complementary disciplines):
  - Validation strategies to enable industry examiners to contribute as part of an examining team in multi-modal studies; and
  - Where applicable, experts in related fields to assess in order to develop diversity within the panel structure and to incrementally disseminate dance knowledge/s within broad academic perspectives.

- Protocols for professional distance to be observed where total anonymity of examiners may not be possible in attending a live performance;

- Acceptance of embodied and discrete, but overlapping, epistemologies of knowledge, both established and emergent, in the field of dance and performance;

- Ongoing attention to linguistic limitations in the articulation of practice-specific ideas/concepts/theories (refer p.23); and

- Maintaining a constant openness to change in relation to all aspects of this code.

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2 Coded quotations are derived from our interviews, forums and responses to the draft code. They are included, with much debt to the authors, as individual voices that illuminate issues and ideas that have arisen in the research.
The following discussions have arisen directly or as 'emergent ideas' from immersion in the research questions, reflecting on the issues of higher degrees in dance and the complexities of their examination processes. These discussions are by no means definitive but are offered as springboards for considering the knowledge/s of dance that is/are and will be. One fundamental challenge of every educator is to grasp the centrifugal force of the unknown while adhering to the centripetal pull of the known. Higher degrees, as perhaps this document illustrates, invites the 'new' while being wedded to the old. It is a paradox which may be unresolvable but to which dancers, with their awareness, and often defiance, of gravity may be able to contribute.

It should be flagged here that, as these terminologies are evolving in response to alternative research methods and models arising from creative practice, they are in a state of flux and hence the subject of much debate. In positioning creative practice within a research context, terms employed include practice-based research, practice-led research, practice as research, performance as research, creative practice as research, creative arts research and research through practice. This overview, however, does not attempt to deal with all of these terms; rather it broadly represents various perceptions drawn from creative arts research and is intended as a guide rather than as a document of definitive classifications. The terms outlined all endeavour to deal with arts-based research degrees where the creative process and/or artefacts form part of the masters or doctoral outcomes, and are concerned with how the creative process is understood as research; the function (and weighting) of research outputs (including creative works, written or verbal components); and the relationship between practice and written elements. Furthermore, the debate around these terminologies arises out of an institutional need for a formal recognition of art practices and processes as an arena of knowledge production (Piccini, 2002). In reviewing literature on this subject, it appears that definitions sometimes overlap or are used interchangeably. Whilst terms and definitions may appear contradictory and confusing, the authors of this report suggest that candidates define their understanding and use of the term(s) they employ up front and then ensure that the practice and accompanying exegetical component(s) clearly reflect this understanding.

A definition of the term research is itself an area of contestation; however, there are outcomes of research that are deemed to be more or less desirable. The impact of any research is largely dependent on its communicability and its ability to be disseminated. Biggs argues that a practitioner's research into their own work is less likely to have a broad interest or application unless some transferable outcome is drawn out of it and is meaningfully communicated to others (Biggs, 2004). Biggs here draws on the eligibility criteria for funding of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's guidelines (AHRC, 2007). These guidelines roughly equate to the ways in which research is recognised in Australia.
The terms ‘practice-based’ and ‘practice-led’ are both currently used to describe degrees that include both creative and written or exegetical components, with documentation of the practice, or the practice itself, becoming part of the thesis. These terms are by no means consensual; hence we outline several understandings of the terms below.

According to Queensland University of Technology’s Creative Industries Faculty, one of the major PLR faculties in Australia, practice-led research not only situates practice within the research process, but also leads the process through practice. The research occurs through the practice, which informs the methodology, content, context and conceptual frameworks of the total research design. Haseman (2006) describes practice-led research as an experiential approach that does not necessarily flow from a preconceived research problem but rather commences from what emerges in practice. Haseman cites Gray (1996), who specifically defines practice-led research as being initiated in practice where problems and questions are formed through the needs of practice, using methods and methodologies familiar to the practitioner. In practice-led research, therefore, the practice itself is generally considered to be a central part of the examinable component. Practice-based research, on the other hand, puts practice at the centre of the research and its findings provide insights about the practice. The practice itself might not be part of the examinable component although the practice and its creative processes may constitute a major part of the methodology. To further clarify the practice-led domain, Haseman (2006) defines a further area as ‘performative research’, where research outputs and claims for knowledge are made through the material forms of practice, which can be research findings in their own right.

QUT’s definitions of PLR and PBR are not necessarily the understanding of other universities in Australia. In the view of Candy (2006), of the Creativity and Cognition Studios of the University of Technology, Sydney, practice-based research is an original investigation carried out partly through practice and the outcomes of that practice, with the doctoral thesis being demonstrated through creative outcomes including ‘images, music, designs, models, digital media or other outcomes such as performances and exhibitions’. Whilst the thesis context and claims may be stated in words, it can only be understood in direct reference to the creative outcomes. Practice-led, according to Candy, is concerned with the nature of practice and new understandings that arise through practice, yet the doctoral thesis may be fully described in words, without the inclusion of a creative outcome.

On the nature of practice-based research, Biggs argues that the term ‘prioritizes some property of experience arising through practice, over cognitive content arising from reflection on practice (our italics) and that most definitions of PBR are very similar, if not identical in nature to action research in that the research is made apparent by the practice or has a consequence in the practice.

Biggs goes on to describe three types of knowledge that arise from practice-based research – Implicit, Tacit and Ineffable – “Explicit knowledge can be put into words, perhaps because the term "explicit" implies the term "linguistic" ... Tacit knowledge, .... may or may not be made explicit (and) ... Ineffable knowledge cannot be put into words” (Biggs. 2004). He defines implicit knowledge or knowledge that is expressed most efficiently in modes other than words as an ‘efficient’ version of explicit knowledge. For example, it is more efficient to show someone how to ride a bicycle than to explain the various operations of pedals, handlebars, balance and so forth.

Whilst some authors and organisations (Pakes 2003; PARIP 2002) use the terms ‘practice-based research’ and ‘practice as research’ synonymously, Kershaw (2001) makes a distinction between these two terms. For Kershaw, practice-based research involves research undertaken through live performance that determines ways in which it can contribute new insights or knowledge to fields other than performance. In his view, practice-based research may be conducted for ‘historical, political or aesthetic purposes, etc’ and need not be conducted by theatre scholars per se. By the term practice as research, on the other hand, Kershaw refers to research conducted into performance practice to determine how that practice may be developing new insights into or knowledge about the forms, genres, uses, etc. of
performance itself, for example with regard to their relevance to broader social and/or cultural processes' (2001, p.138).

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH (PAR)

The PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) was a five-year project conducted between 2001 and 2006 at the University of Bristol, UK. Its aims were to investigate creative and academic issues raised by practice as research in performance and to develop national frameworks for representing these practices within academic contexts. Although PARIP primarily refers to practice as research, the group also includes the term practice-based in their definitions. Whilst they also state that the term practice as research may not be the best definition to cover all activities of practitioner-researchers, they claim the term is a means for opening up issues arising from practice as a mode of research (Piccini, 2002). The 2001 PARIP symposium, which looked at various issues including the question of what constitutes practice as research, concluded that there is a distinction between practice and practice as research, which thus imposes a set of protocols on the practitioner-researcher. PARIP suggests these protocols fall into two areas: that the research must have a set of separable, demonstrable, research findings that are "abstractable" and not simply locked into the experience of performing, and that it has to be such an abstract, which is supplied with the piece of practice, which would set out the originality of the piece, set it in the appropriate context, and makes it useful to the wider community (Piccini, 2002). PARIP commentators qualify this understanding by noting that these protocols are not fixed and are institution-dependent.

MIXED-MODE PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

Melrose (2003), writing from the perspective of practice as research in performance, questions the relationship between academic writing and performance theory, and the relationship between performance theory and performance practice. Here, she differentiates between 'spectator studies' or spectator-based enquiries into performance, and interrogatory, self-reflective practitioner-based enquiries. To extend research into professional performance-making practices, she suggests the notion of 'mixed-mode disciplinary practices', which may not necessarily be 'writing-based or mediated, but some of which may call upon discipline-specific metalanguages of production'. In this way, the practitioner-researcher 'uses aspects of professional practice to explore aspects of professional practice'. She suggests several ways this might be understood. Firstly, that if the 'epistemic' or 'knowledge practice' is identified as the focus of the research, then it needs to be accepted that the professional practitioner survives in the field through a combination of mastery and invention and that this inventiveness is already research driven. Secondly, the focus should be on how these practices can be 'successfully worded'. Thirdly, epistemic practices can operate through interrogative self-reflection and speculative processes. Melrose here draws attention to the significance of performance-making processes that may not be accounted for in assessments based on performance effects or the public showing alone. She states that whilst professional and creative arts practice in performance is dependent on the live performance event, the epistemic outcome may not necessarily reside in the public show, even though a performance may be the creative and professional outcome.

DANCE PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

Pakes (2003), concerned specifically with dance practice as doctoral research notes that, with the growth of practical doctorates, questions arise as to what constitutes an 'original' research enquiry. As she states: '[w]hat is the product of an enquiry conducted through practice – an artwork or the knowledge that makes it available? Are these distinguishable from one another?' (p.129). For Pakes, an important question is whether it is 'viable to require the process rather than the product of practice in research to be original, or whether the originality of research is assessed via product or process' (p.135). Pakes draws on an array of views within art and dance domains, as well as several UK-based reports on practice as research, to both present and probe examples of what might constitute an original artwork or research enquiry. Here, as a case in point, she gives the example of a work that displays the first attributes of a particular style, such as a new type of multimedia performance or 'a work which establishes an idiosyncratic movement
language which stands alongside those of other established practitioners in a distinctive and significant style’ (p.130). In both these cases, evaluation is dependent on comparison with other artworks.

Pakes observes that a major emphasis in practical doctorates to date has been on the cognitive dimensions of the artwork, where practitioner-researchers are expected not only to move the art form forward, but also to increase understanding about the practice (p.132). Thus she observes a further sense of what might be understood as original as ‘the newness of the object’s cognitive content rather than its artistic originality’ (p.130), where originality, for example, could be determined through a series of artistic representations including ‘paintings, sculptures, poems or digital animations which explore similar issues to those examined in or through the new dance work’ and which is subsequently evaluated on the basis of comparison to those representations. Another instance might be where the choreographer grapples with an issue that has been approached previously through philosophical methods, to see how dance might treat the same issue in a different way. A further example could be insights elicited through the enquiry, such as ‘the new knowledge it makes available about human experience, the body or proprioceptive awareness, rather than the innovation it effects in artistic terms’ (p.131).

According to Pakes, dance practitioner-researchers should not be expected to preconceive the outcome of the work while they are still in the early phases, yet they can and should explain why and what they are investigating; shifting the focus of the originality requirement to the investigation, rather than, or in addition to, the artistic outcome (p.134). Here Pakes suggests that is necessary to ‘recognise the different kinds of claim to originality that must be made by the researchers at different stages of their process’ (p.138). It may be that originality lies in the particularity of the investigation, in aspects of its processes, its interpretation through dance, of knowledge from other disciplines or in the revelatory capacity of an historical dance reconstruction and, as such, the claim to originality needs to be made on ‘a case-to-case basis in different ways at different stages of a practice-based project’ (p.143).
The 1997 United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) report, *Practice-based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design*, claims that conventional doctoral characteristics of originality, mastery and contribution to the field can be met through the creative work, yet a written submission is necessary for both contextualisation of the creative work and for assessment purposes. Candlin (2000) sees several problems in making practice-based degrees equivalent to conventional doctorates. Firstly, equivalency tends to privilege the written component over the creative work, thus maintaining a divide between practice and theory. Further, if conventional doctorate-ness is dependent on the exposition of both process and outcomes, an over-emphasis on writing (as the basis for legitimacy and evaluation) may preclude evidence arising from and demonstrated through the creative processes of the practice itself. In addition, Candlin finds the report overlooks the fact that writing can be considered a mode of practice and, conversely, that arts practice also includes theoretical dimensions.

Dally, Holbrook, Lawry and Graham (2004) raise the concern of creative practice-based research conforming to traditional academic models in order to achieve validity. They cite Marshall and Newton (2000), who are also critical of practice-based programs based on the development of practice that is then contextualised and theorised through a written document, which they claim 'contradicts efforts to have the practice-based component recognised as a potentially valued research outcome in its own right'. In their own study on visual arts examiners within the Australian context, Dally et al. found, however, that the exegesis is widely considered to be a supporting document, a means for clarifying the research process and positioning the work within the field. The artwork, on the other hand, is considered to be the primary element in the relationship.

**SUMMARY**

In positioning creative arts practice within a research context, various terminologies have arisen from an institutional need for the recognition of arts practices and processes as legitimate areas of knowledge production. The terms we have outlined here deal with arts-based research degrees where the creative process and/or artefacts form part of the masters or doctoral outcomes, and are concerned with how the creative process is understood as research, the function of research outputs and the relationship between practical and written components. These emergent and contested definitions are continuing to be interrogated, providing a rich and dynamic set of understandings, which are informing similarly emergent design approaches to frame and support this area of research.

[Note: In order to avoid the contradictions already institutionalised within the alternative terminologies, the investigators have chosen to use the term ‘multi-modal’ research which encompasses all the nuances of approach and uses of practice discussed above.]

**RESEARCH DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

Assessment of research higher degrees is predicated on the development and articulation of an appropriate research design framework. In multi-modal research, particular care needs to be taken because methodologies for creative practice research are emergent, and have not been fully and completely defined. Due in part to the relative youth of the field, this methodological indeterminacy is also a consequence of creative practice’s intrinsic emergent nature, making it questionable whether research methodology can or should be completely defined. For these reasons, we prefer to use the term ‘research design framework’ and suggest that developing a thorough and clearly articulated research design framework for multi-modal projects is a critical task for every higher degree candidate in this area.

A research design framework arises from a world-view that constructs the nature and function of dance practice in the context of a particular dance project. A robust and comprehensive design framework will enable candidates to gather and articulate methods that will support their investigation in a way that clearly defines their use of practice in research. This should be an active and emergent process in each project.
The consideration of research design developed here arose from a paradox that emerged from our interviews with candidates, supervisors and examiners in this study. There was strong agreement among respondents that written and practical elements in a dance thesis should work as two components of one conceptual argument; i.e. that the two components should operate in parallel, that written components should work to conceptualize the practice and, ideally, form an integrated package which is direct and “equal”. As one respondent put it, “they go together. The project stands and falls together” (VDe05). However, there was not a clear agreement on the specific nature of the relationship between practice and writing. Specifically, there was disagreement over whether studio dance practices can, in and of themselves, be considered research methodologies. Some respondents considered that practice can be its own methodology, while other respondents argued that we “need to be careful of confusion between artistic excellence in the practice and academic excellence about the practice - they are complementary but not the same in terms of attainment and delivery of knowledge” (SSa02). This lack of agreement also extended to the relationship between ‘practice’ and ‘the work’, with some respondents using the terms interchangeably, while others understood these elements as distinct, if interrelated.

This lack of agreement demonstrates the emergent nature of research design in dance research, and the need for more work in clearly defining its parameters and possibilities. It also, however, sheds light on the nature of the distinctions that need to be clearly made in developing and articulating research design. This discussion presents an analysis of the issues involved, and develops a framework within which these apparent disjunctures can be used to understand research design as a continuum of approaches that place dance practice in differing relationships with writing and with interdisciplinarity.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS ARTEFACT OR PROCESS

Different approaches to research design involving dance practice hinge around the researcher’s understanding of the relationship between dance practice and the ‘findings’ of the research. The crucial issue is the extent to which the research is distinct from, or distinguishable from, artistic practice. Where research outcomes are considered indistinguishable from dance practice, practice itself forms a primary site of, and method for, investigation. In this instance, any other articulation of findings, such as within a written text or ‘exegesis’, may be useful, even necessary, but will always be to some extent derivative of the dance practice.

Alternatively, if dance practice is viewed as simply one component within a larger research design, then research ‘findings’ will exist, and be able to be articulated, to some extent outside the mode of practice. In the first formulation, research outcomes could be said to be conceptually indistinguishable from, or ‘synonymous with’, the dance practice itself. In the second formulation, research outcomes could be understood to be conceptually separate from the dance practice, even when informed by it. Thus, it is possible to formulate a continuum of approaches between these two extremes, within which most research projects will lie; the conflations of outcomes and practice on the one hand and the separation of outcomes and practice on the other.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF CHOREOGRAPHY

Whilst this document deals primarily with dance to which choreography is inextricably linked, it is evident that both dance and choreography also include various practices - sometimes but not always - under the banner of dance, such as physical theatre, circus skills and some performance art to name a few. In all of these forms, choreography has normally been associated with physical practices or modes of embodiment.

Ironically, choreography is historically aligned with writing: “[t]o choreograph is, originally, to trace or to note down dance. This is the meaning that [Raoul-Augier] Feuillet, the inventor of the word, assigns it in 1700, in the title of his work Choreography, or the art of describing dance with demonstrative characters, figures, and signs” (Louppe, 1994, 14). Today, writing, except for the specialist notations of Laban and Benesh, has slipped from fundamental definitions of choreography which most often encompass the creation, development and manipulation of movement in space and
time. This of course does not preclude the interdisciplinary nature of much choreography, which incorporates music, visual arts, design, lighting, text, or film into its conceptualisation, creation and staging.

Indeed choreography at the present time has never morphed so fast into other forms and modes of expression and will no doubt continue to do so. Like the proposed multi-modal nature of dance research, choreography can also be viewed as a multi-modal practice. In order to allow diversity within consistency to frame understandings of what choreography might be for the purpose of this code of practice, we offer the following comments:

The choreographic landscape has become more layered and nuanced, complicated by increasingly digitised and on-line communication and expressive encounters in virtual as well as ‘real’ space ... how can we frame choreographic concepts and practices in a globalised environment of blurred boundaries, interdisciplinary processes and the slipperiness of provisional knowledge? Contemporary choreography grapples with a multiplicity of patternings within and across bodies and ‘messy’ practices; a polyphonic overlay of rich and bewildering possibilities, conceptually, technologically, culturally, socially. Choreography’s reach and scope have expanded, perhaps in some cases beyond recognition, arguably without the formerly necessary pre-requisite of steps and movements ... Whilst the body and movement are still central to the above understandings of choreography, notions of coordination, connectivity and the management of complex interdisciplinary systems are equally significant in the creative process and the emergent definitions of what choreography is today. (Stock, 2008)

EXAMINATION AS A COMPLEX DYNAMIC SYSTEM

You really need to have a new set of guidelines developed each time you have a thesis, which is ridiculous, but you know it’s very hard (WMu14).

Examining theses of any shape or form is a difficult task at the level of a Research Masters or Doctorate because work at this level is by nature complex, involving numerous variables that relate to one another in, arguably, unique ways. When the variables of material practices are added to this notional equation, examiners can feel quite overwhelmed. This situation is exacerbated by the:

- Newness of material practices within research contexts;
o Common (though questionable) association of artistic practices with subjective responses. How often do you hear the question “but how can you measure an art work?” The answer, of course, is that art works are not measured they are evaluated;

o Variety and often unknown ways in which practice is or facilitates research, made doubly complex by dance’s multiple purposes and forms; and

o Tendency of some (poor) artistic work to be introspective and self-centred.

How then to construct a system to guide examiners in the actual evaluation process that makes allowances for variable relations between elements (and, indeed, of the actual number of pertinent variables); encourages critical reflective feedback common to artistic evaluations and still accounts for the diversity of research forms in which dance might operate?

Starting with a single type of dance research seemed to be the way to go - choreographic performance as the research outcome, being a favoured type of multi-modal research seemed an obvious choice. Naturally, this ‘one’ type subdivides into genres, location and so many other considerations, but those difficulties might be manageable?

Under consideration were:

(1) Disciplinary-specific issues raised in creating choreographic outcomes;

(2) Theoretical/conceptual relations between practice and written explanatory means; and/or

(3) The difficulties of consistency when there are so many variables in a choreographic investigation where the research outcome is conveyed principally through the finished production of a performance.

The result emerged as the diagram below, Complex Dynamic System for a Choreographic Performance Outcome, which suggests that the examination process is not unlike the research under scrutiny, being a ‘danced’ system or a metaphorical ecosystem that depends on the dynamic interrelationship between a number of factors.

Here, the intention is to emphasise the ‘active’ participation with the thesis materials of the examiner who enters the process at the final stage and is asked to judge the significance of many variables. Instead of a checklist of attributes, which tends to be the usual instruction to the examiners, we would like to suggest a more interactive proforma, one that takes into account the variable intentions, resources and situated-ness of the researcher/choreographers concerned, as well as the examiner’s acumen and tacit disciplinary knowledge.

The over-arching guide to the evaluation process should be the stated research design framework by the candidate which should be consistent with the performance presented. It is acceptable that the reflective processes which occur post performance, and will be evidenced in the written component, may involve a shift in the contextualising/conceptual framework but the initial framework will guide examiners’ engagement with the performance. Consequently, we propose that a checklist approach be replaced by a more interactive system.

FOR RESEARCH WITH A CHOREOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE OUTCOME

A checklist approach might consider the following components in terms of the stated intention or framing of the research:

o The work’s capacity to illustrate the conceptual and/or theoretical underpinnings of the research;

o Originality or the imaginative treatment of embodied/physical practice as a means to evoke an, or many idea/s;

o Potential meaning-making via the physical composition;

o Phrase and/or sectional development/cohesion/dynamics across the total structure of the work;
o Potential meaning-making via extra-physical elements: music/sound, design/performance site, text/dialogue, object use, interactive media;

o Appropriateness/quality of dancers and production elements;

o Cohesion/integration of all elements and levels of production in terms of the stated intention/framing/choreographic notes/emergent premise;

o Extra-ordinary features: culturally specific orientation or anti-dance performance/positions; and

o Micro-structural choices/development/invention within a phrase or small units of movement.

In the diagram below, the factors are the same but the act of judgement is acknowledged as more reliant on the dynamic mix as perceived by the examiner (and highlighted by the candidate) rather than a straightforward tick of boxes. In such a system, it is possible to conclude that the strengths of a highly professionalised and polished performance may indicate one way of solving a research question, while insight into a conceptual problem via a less polished or craft-orientated performance may provide another solution. It is not intended that all these elements must be present in every thesis, but that a case-specific combination of some of these elements may provide a basis for evaluation in multi-modal dance theses. Additionally, candidates and supervisors may be able to construct the study’s research design framework along the lines of a dynamic system which is more conducive to the dance environment.

The danger is that an examiner may find the proposed system daunting, even if that system represents more closely his/her actual evaluation process. In acknowledging the complexity of evaluation and a degree of courage that each act of examination represents, the objective is to open evaluation to both its strengths and possible vulnerabilities. In short, the examiner, while maintaining arm’s length impartiality, becomes metaphorically engaged in the candidate’s process and embarks on the examination journey that encompasses disciplinary conventions and challenges.
Evaluation may involve the following interplay between attributes: the guiding principle is that inter-relationships are significant both in the delineation of the 'thesis' and in its evaluation.

Once we had come to terms with the possibilities of thinking in dynamic systems, we realised that more examples would be beneficial to demonstrate how the concept of the dynamic interplay of variables might apply to the many different types of theses that may arise. The following is another example which suggests how an examiner might engage with a process-type multi-modal thesis.
COMPLEX DYNAMIC SYSTEM FOR PROCESS-ORIENTATED RESEARCH

Note: the concept of a complex dynamic system should also be applicable to wholly written theses in dance where the variables are likely to include interdisciplinary elements.
ENTRY PATHWAYS

I would say for sure that the outcomes are likely to be of a higher quality if the person has spent some time out in the industry and comes back and does some research rather than go straight on from an undergraduate to a postgraduate degree. However that may depend upon the person, so I don’t think it should be a prerequisite (QQt06).

So much of the achievement in every creative arts does in fact, relate to life experience ... and the perceptions and insights that one brings to the creative activity, which in my mind should also be part of research degrees in the creative arts. It’s a little difficult to believe that someone who’s come straight out of school, gone into an Honours degree and then straight into a doctorate, can actually have the gravitas, the authority which in any of the creative arts fields, tends to come more with a bit more life experience under your belt and a bit more experience of the discipline (QQt16).

Whilst it is recognised that the conventional pathway to doctoral research is a direct pathway through a first class Honours and/or a research Masters, in the dance discipline this applies predominantly to written theses where the foci of study are about the practices of dance, usually contextualised by intersections with complementary disciplines such as education, history, anthropology, psychology, aesthetics, biomechanics and so forth.

Increasingly multi-modal theses, wherein studies concentrate on knowledge in and/or through the practices of dance, comprise the majority of dance research higher degrees. Doctoral level study in choreography or performance can rarely be achieved without a substantial body of advanced professional practice in the field prior to entering the program. Creative practice research studies in dance require several years of industry experience, beyond undergraduate training, to reach the necessary level of experiential and embodied understanding for doctoral study of this nature. Consequently, there is a preference to accept mature age students for these programs.

These applicants may not always have recognised university qualifications since their intensive professional dance training can have occurred in a conservatory or other professional training environments. Therefore, there are strong arguments to be made to university authorities to accept equivalency in terms of a high level of professional practice and experience in lieu of the usual academic requirements. In spite of the challenges, experienced artists who have been admitted under this exceptional rule have successfully managed the transition to the rigours of doctoral study, arguably because of the sophisticated understanding of their experiential practice, maturity and, often, incisive argumentation developed in writing grant applications.

We recommend that equivalency be accepted for multi-modal research studies, decided on a case by case basis with input from leading industry experts, together with dance academics who have an understanding of creative practice.
SO JUST WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH 'THEORY AND PRACTICE'?

The [theses] that are really outstanding, for me, are where the relationship between the theory and practice are just so blissfully integrated, that you can see in the exhibition something magical in the work the ‘Ah ha!’ ... The writing – that same sense of fluidity – that they have taken you somewhere else in their writing. They are telling you things that are new. ... Exceptional ones are the ones that are entertaining - maybe [that’s] the wrong word – but they are entertaining you on every page and you are going ‘Wow – isn’t that interesting?’ they are giving you something more than just ‘this is what I’ve done’ (emphasis added) (WCuOl).

Firstly, ‘theory and practice’ is an expression which is bound to the binary oppositions of linguistic structure, where ‘meanings’ are distinguishable because of the phenomenon of un-like ‘meanings’. A cat with four legs, head and fur is not a dog. In its pairing with practice, theory, according to the most basic linguistic rules, is thus distinguishable from practice, even though the point/s of distinction may not be as transparent as the rules imply. In western thought, the spectre of the Cartesian split incisively separates thought from body. Thought, thus, corresponds to mental faculties that relegate theory and the body to ‘unthinking’ practice.

Likewise, academia is separated from artistic interpretations, favouring positivistic methods of explanation about human experience and, thus, relying on methodologies of proof according to scientific criteria as against speculative intuition and so forth. Today, the two worldviews of science and the arts seem to collide, even though their historical antecedents may have harboured more inclusive perspectives. In brief, complex social constructions become embedded within structural binarism to create conventional meanings and the implicit divide of the expression, ‘theory AND practice.’

To propose alternatives to conventional meanings, as do proponents of multi-modal degrees in the creative arts, appears reasonable until the trappings of linguistic structures intervene. This word-formed or ‘scriptural’ language, this literacy perceived to be the fundamental earth of our meaning-making faculty turns slippery. When art actually reveals something or takes the viewer somewhere else, it changes the consciousness in a way that might also be an aesthetic thing – that to me is when all those things – the critical and aesthetic come together in a way that gives you the artistic aesthetic experience but also more than that (VDe07).

The practitioner researcher theorises in the ‘doing’ and its integral reflective processes, some part of which may necessarily be conveyed in words. Practice generates and/or explores theory at a deep level of thought and thought, in our understanding, can occur in an indeterminate variety of media. Words, in this perspective, constitute one form of practice, one means by which such theorising can be expressed. However, as Susan Melrose argues “enough expert academic writers (some of whom actually do know better) use the noun ‘theory’ as though what it stood for were writerly and written” (Melrose 2003). Johanna Pentikäinen likewise questions the transparency of language noting that the “linguistic turn of the last decade led us to see language as a meaning-making medium itself, and therefore, we are not able to see it as a mere documentation of something already done” (Pentikäinen, 2006), something, moreover, already thought. Paul Carter’s strategy to circumvent the problem focuses on practice or the multiplicity of practices, all of which he describes as material activities seeking to reveal knowledge of human experience. With a sleight of hand, he employs writing metaphorically, proposing that the materiality of practice is ‘written’ sound, movement, painting and so forth. In spite of the appeal of their ideas, these commentators continue to struggle in a cage of words because ultimately we are all trapped in the “scriptural economy,” a term used by Michel de Certeau to account for the university and its role in the knowledge economy” (Melrose, 2003).

It is not that words are antithetical to research in alternative modes but that words bear those linguistic structures which tend to deflect meaning back into conventional attitudes, attitudes which invariably involve politics or power
relations. In many ways, the processes now faced by multi-modal researchers echo the argumentative strategies enacted by feminist commentators when they were forced to demonstrate how ‘language’ operated with a gender bias. Our cause is statistically less explosive. But we do have to argue against assumptions inbuilt into the systems in which we operate and theory, in academia, has a formidable presence, evoking very particular meanings for some academics and their disciplinary conventions, not to mention the custom-built protocols of administrative management.

One particular assumption encountered by multi-modal researchers is set in place by what Melrose calls the ‘spectating’ as against the practising professional. For Melrose, time is the qualifier in two incommensurable ‘expert’ systems. The ‘spectating’ academic looks back to arrive at knowledge whereas, in her terms, the artist practitioner projects forwards towards potential ‘transformative events’ in the production of knowledge. This temporal distinction bears ramifications in terms of research management, one significant branch of which concerns examination processes and expectations.

Theory for one system ‘picks up the mind’s pieces’ and translates effects in a habitually accepted causal logic of words making reference to framed and written concepts expounded by antecedent theorists, whereas, for the other system, theory underlies the projection of the mind in experimental media (dance for instance) from a combination of experiential and often, interdisciplinary concepts to see what puzzles or realisations might result.

In both instances, theory or a conceptual revelation can be a result of the particular practice in question (dancing or writing), delivered according to that practice and/or via the contextual wording. By the same token, theoretical premises may be tested, extended or interwoven across the media of practices. The relationship depends on the intention and design of the investigation. The challenge is less a matter of conception than of avoiding the binary linguistic trap by consciously changing habits in the use of terms which may prove difficult in the wider university and professional environments. Nonetheless, if the feminists managed to abolish ‘chairman’ and ‘mankind,’ there is hope for theorising practice.

**WORD LENGTH FOR MULTI-MODAL THERSES**

*In terms of weighting of the components, there’s that issue of the university struggling with how to measure and the practitioner finding ways it will work for them. This is an issue that needs to be critically engaged to allow the relationship of those things to be tested and wrestled with from a practitioner’s viewpoint (QQt09).*

Word length is a critical issue in defining possible formats for Masters and Doctoral theses involving studio practice. In our interviews, most respondents argued strongly in favour of a significant written component. The consensus appeared to be that a written component of between 30-50,000 words at doctoral level was generally considered long enough to articulate the substantive and original knowledge generated, allowing space for the deep integration of theory and practice. A few respondents argued for the possibility of shorter written components in some institutional contexts. For Masters, 20-30,000 words was generally considered appropriate and long enough to articulate knowledge of the field, innovation and the use of appropriate methodology.

Generally, the exegesis/written component was considered by our participants as a vital means of communicating knowledge beyond the embodied understanding of the choreographer and participants. Without the benefit of an exegesis or guiding document written by the candidate, an examiner may be forced into a position of complicity in construing the thesis for the candidate that goes beyond the notion of formative assessment.

However, some caution needs to be exercised when determining and applying guidelines for specific word lengths for written components. Different research design frameworks will situate dance performance or demonstration differently in their relationships to the ‘outcomes’ of the research, and these different formulations can be expected to result in different formats and lengths for written components. Ultimately, word length needs to be evaluated in terms of what needs to be written to clearly articulate the outcomes of each individual thesis, and the cohesiveness and thoroughness of the practice/written package is perhaps more important than the specific word length.
It's like we can have ninety nine percent creative work, but we've still got to have that one percent thing, which we put more emphasis on. But if we actually think, as what I do, the whole PhD is an interpretation. The whole PhD is research, therefore we shouldn't be dividing it up into real estate, you know, forty percent this, fifty percent that. The whole thing, and it's our experience from a phenomenological perspective, how do we understand that presentation as knowledge? We're nowhere near that and that's the problem (QQto05).

Our recommendation is, therefore, for clearly defined word lengths be designated within specific institutional regulations, along with a concomitant understanding, both in examination and in institutional guidelines, that the precise word length of each individual thesis will be governed by the specific research design framework the candidate develops, and that candidates may argue, in their written components, for shorter or longer word lengths based on their articulated project design.

**'LIVENESS' AND THE EXAMINATION PROCESS**

Dance is an activity of many manifestations all of which should be considered as potential targets for investigators whose objective is to contribute to the 'sum of human knowledge/s.' Social dance in discos and rave parties, ethnic maintenance programmes within selected immigrant communities or integrated dance-in-education in school or preschool settings tend to be side-lined in debates about the crucial place of 'liveness' in knowledge evaluation processes, yet no-one would doubt the efficaciousness of the experiential or embodied natures of such subjects. These topics have featured in research papers by sociological, anthropological and educational scholars since the 1940s: for instance in the work of Franz Boas, Gertrude Kurath and Margaret Doubler in the USA and in the network of folklorists and musicologists of the European tradition. When the first doctoral dissertation or thesis concentrating on dance actually was published is more difficult to determine though their numbers have gradually increased over the last couple of decades, more often than not under the umbrella of cultural studies with its concerns about the variables and variations of human experience. The most recent development in dance scholarship has been the entrance of actual dance practice into the thesis raising issues of presentation for evaluation purposes (the demonstration of the knowledge) and documentation (the preservation of that knowledge within the temporal progressions of research). While some sections of the academic community remain sceptical about the scope of movement's mindful-ness as a bearer of knowledge, it is generally accepted that practices, whether originating in nursing, mathematics, ceremonies or the arts, do embody tacit and/or material knowledge/s that is communicated and apprehended in ways that are often parallel to thought transmitted via the accepted channel of the written word (the material practice of writing).

As a Kuhn-like paradigm shift, this transition from the power of the word (with all its religious connotations) to competing powers of practice bears not just political ramifications but ones of a pragmatic order. It is such ramifications which are addressed here in terms of the protocols of examination of postgraduate research degrees. Simplistically, what has occurred in terms of dance is that its 'practice' has, in some situations, supplanted descriptions about its practice which appears logically plausible but which presents problems both in accepted examination protocols and the subsequent documentation system. Whereas ethnologists and educators have in the past been content to rely upon

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3 According to a library search, the first thesis to explore the 'moral and ethical aspects' of dance was Johann Peter Gruenenburg's *Dissertationio theologica circularis de saltatione christiano licita: Ob einem christen zu tanzen sey?* of 1719 (with thanks to faculty librarian, Ken Gasmier). Australian searches suggest that the first thesis related to dance in this country was Elizabeth M. C. Blake's (1964) *Benjamin Britten's "The prince of the pagodas" as a culmination of the "classical" tradition expressed in the music of Delibes and Tchaikowsky.* [Perth, WA]

written description, analysis and transmission, many current researchers/practitioners question the competence of words alone to convey knowledge born of and pertaining to material ‘knowing.’

The first question then is why do choreographic investigations culminating in a performance insist on the irreplaceable experience of the ‘live’ performance for examination purposes? Particularly, in an age of digital reproduction that is accessible and of a relatively good quality, the insistence of the ‘live’ can be seen as a vain attempt on the part of performers to cling to former conventions not unlike the way in which university conventions cling to the printed word. However, if knowledge is to be taken seriously across its multi-modalities, then the ‘live’ performance becomes the crucible that pertains to how those particular epistemological genres are made manifest in human experience.

*It’s like the difference between in vivo and invitro - you want to study your subject as it is in real life and that’s with an audience* (VDe05).

Creating a performance is an act of communication dependent on the audience factor. Constructing/creating a performance is determined by various degrees of engagement and/or alienation/confrontation with a (usually) notional audience, so that a maker (or researcher for the purposes of this paper) does not exist without the other, the recipient or audience. In most, if not all performances, audiences play a subtle role in what might be called the flow of feedback: the energy exuded from performers is bounced back when the audience is engaged or alternatively lies ‘cold’ when an audience rebuffs the performance. Performers calibrate these reactions in the process of performing and, in complex ways, adjust to the feedback. Performance thus, as many commentators have pointed out, is a quintessential phenomenological environment, where an enactment of knowledge is grounded in being in the world.

Intrinsic, to the communicative acts of the ‘live’ performance is the issue of kinaesthetic intelligence which is in its optimal receptive mode in three-dimensionality environments. Screen products can provoke such responses but, generally, they do so via a *re-making* of the original choreography by inter-weaving different angles, proximities and locations. In other words, the ‘live’ performance is transformed into a dance film or, in the research context, a different thesis. Such a translation from the live to the digital also changes the three-dimensionality to a two dimensional flat screen altering the sense of perspective. Point of view is also limited to a number of fixed positions.

*It depends on the purpose of the practical component in the thesis. If it is an experiment, it may not need to have the audience* (NMa02).

This differentiation may be less clear in theses presenting process-type investigations, such as experimentation with teaching/choreographic approaches or responses within multi-media formats (relations of ‘live’ and virtual). Nevertheless, the ‘live’ examination experience may be crucial to understanding the significance of the investigation and thus needs to guide the candidate’s research design framework decisions and subsequent examination format.

Giving access to ‘live’ performances/processes has a number of ramifications:

- Performance/presentation scheduling by candidate and supervisor - and subsequent organisation by graduate school officers to assemble the examination panel;
- Resources, where possible to accommodate interstate examiners. This point is crucial considering the relatively small pool of academically qualified dance specialists;
- Candidate’s formulation of a ‘framing statement’ or ‘emergent premise’ for his/her research for the examiners at the performance/presentation which normally falls well before the submission of the final thesis package;
- Protocols for maintaining distance between candidates/supervisors and examiners and between examiners themselves. In most instances, informing candidates, supervisors and examiners of their responsibilities is sufficient to develop appropriate etiquette;
- It may not be possible to maintain the anonymity of examiners but again distance and non-contact should be made a condition of the candidature;

- Depending on the particularities of the study, it may be equitable and beneficial for the candidate if one of the examining panel is a professional choreographer or artistic director who might not have academic qualifications. Such an examiner is liable to be of assistance to the candidate post examination in much the same way that other disciplines chose examiners who are likely to support the candidate’s future publishing; and

- Costs of involving international examiners will usually be prohibitive unless there is a digital compromise for one of the examination team.

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### EXAMINERS AND THE ACADEMIA/DANCE PROFESSION RELATIONSHIP

An ideal of complementarity governs perceptions about the relationship between academia and the dance profession, though what that might mean in actuality is not as clear cut. Distinctions between expectations of the industry and those of academia become more pronounced when the issue of examiners is raised. Some respondents were open to balanced perspectives with industry and academic examiners sitting side by side, yet there was opposition to people without experience of the academic journey being in a position of judgement.

> I’m also really keen to engage with industry, but you have to choose your industry person reasonably carefully ... you have to choose somebody that has at some point or still is sort of aware of academia and the aspirations of the academy (SAoD1).

Whilst there appears to be a strong case for using an industry examiner provided that person has an understanding of the needs of the academy, there is some hesitation about using industry professionals without academic experience, as they may not fully grasp the investigative nature of the postgraduate journey:

> If you haven’t done a PhD you are working from assumptions on what you think one is, not the reality ... And I think too that from outside a PhD people may not be able to set the bar for the philosophical project being investigated (VDeO5).

### LIMITED POOL OF EXAMINERS: INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS OFFER EXPERTISE IN THE FIELD

A common perception is that the pool of examiners for multi-modal dance degrees in Australia is limited and hence professional practitioners can potentially increase the number of available examiners.

> One of the first and really important issues in dance is that the pool is incredibly small. But I do think when a lot of the assessment rests on artistic, aesthetic, professional background and experience of looking at work [and] you’ve really got to have people experienced in the kind of dance the candidate is really doing. For example, should I be asked to examine a thesis in contact improvisation ... I think I would be inclined to be a little too soft on it because I don’t have a nuanced view of good, bad, indifferent contact. I don’t have the nuanced judgment of someone who works in the field (VDeO5).

Finding a balance between examiners from industry and academia provokes debates over the respective merits and rigours of artistic as against academic expectations. In dance, many academics have experience of being practicing artists outside the academy and are naturally concerned with issues of quality and technique within the work’s
conception and realisation. On the other hand, what an academic focus can bring to bear on the examination is the way the performance investigates a problem. Those two viewpoints overlap but are not synonymous.

We like to find a balance between an academic, a free-thinking academic that can appreciate performance. You have to be philosophically attuned, you have to find somebody who thinks that performance is research. So you get a good performer that's got an academic credential and then you find somebody who's got industry cred and knows about the academy (SAO1).

VOCATIONAL TENDENCIES OF HIGHER DEGREES MAY ALIGN WITH INDUSTRY STANDARDS

If the intention of the candidate is to create work in industry-based sectors, then it is appropriate to have an industry-based professional who, as an examiner, may be able to position the work nationally or internationally.

You can rely on the rigour of the artist. I think the more that this vocational thing that is happening with higher degrees the more you will need to have people from that particular expertise rather than academic people, because if the purpose of the degree is to get you up and doing art, then that's what you have to be assessed by (WEd16).

On the other hand, industry examiners may confer higher value on the quality of the performance outcomes and its viability in a professional context. This may result in privileging the artistic work over research processes and focus of inquiry. It is important, therefore, that the candidate clarifies the research focus and aims, particularly if the epistemic focus of the journey is to reside in the processes, rather than in the live work at the culmination of a process.

DOCUMENTING PRACTICE(S)

Several writers, including Rye (2003) and Piccini (2002), draw attention to the problem of documentation of practice in relation to research outputs. On this issue, Rye (2003) states that ‘the research may be concerned with exactly those qualities of the live encounter and the production of embodied knowledge/s which can not, by definition, be embedded, reproduced or demonstrated in any recorded document’. Thus the ephemeral nature of the live performance becomes an issue if the recording of the event is deemed a research output. Furthermore, according to Piccini (2002), if the live performance itself is already considered a documentation of practice, then the question arises as to the nature and role of any recorded outputs. Here, the archiving of outputs as a means for making the research accessible to the wider research community becomes a significant issue. Piccini points to possibilities of different ‘registers’ of documentation, including ‘traces’ produced through the creative
process (such as scripts, drafts, notes, and designs) and their role as documentation of research outputs. Issues surrounding the documentation of live events do not apply to projects where the research inquiry and outcomes focus on dance/choreographic practices specifically developed for the screen or other kinds of recorded media.

**BENEFIT OF DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION**

*That might be where technology and things comes in and can start to offer other kinds of solutions where you can start to almost like layer things and allow different sorts of transparencies or what would you call them, palimpsest scenarios where you can read through* (QQt09).

In multimodal theses, digital documentation is a means for articulating different strands of the research inquiry that cannot be adequately presented in the body of the written/printed component or through any supplementary appendices and notes. The processes of creative practice may be more closely represented through the non-linear, cross-referencing capacity of digital formats that ‘not only highlight the outcomes, but also elucidate the processes leading to these results’ (Schipper, 2007, p.4). Digital documentation can incorporate video of live performance components and also provide a means for clarifying the research journey through video excerpts of studio practice, choreographic notes, sound files, sketches, photographs and so on, thus serving to convey the richness of the inquiry. Digital recordings can be memory aids to the live performance artefact, art works in their own right or a combination of the two treatments, all of which should be integrated into the total thesis package.

**IMPORTANCE OF GOOD DOCUMENTATION AS EFFECTIVE MEMORY AIDS**

Normally I receive a video or some visual documentation to remind me. Sometimes it can be a very long time ... I need that documentation to remind me of the intricacies and nuances that went with the performance (WMu14).

Video documentation is perceived as an effective tool for triggering impressions of the live performance, in addition to any initial note taking undertaken by the examiner. This is particularly pertinent considering the potential time lag between examining the live performance and receiving the final thesis. Given examiner expectation of high quality documentation, it is recommended that financial and technical resources be allocated for this purpose.

As long as there’s really good documentation – and there always is now – and if examiners were aware of that time line before, I think it would be fine. And I think in a way, an illuminating document that came six months later with a really good DVD would really open the memory to that live performance (VMe02).

**FACILITATING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION AND WRITTEN COMPONENT**

Documentation should allow the examiner to access easily the particular element of the work being referenced. A full length video record of a performance is not much help if particular moments in the work are referred to as examples of a claim made/question asked (DCAU02).

Whilst digital formats, such as DVDs, are a useful means for presenting non-linear information, it is advised that the contents and navigation pathways are kept as simple and clear as possible. The candidate should bear in mind that the reader will need to travel back and forth between the written and digital components, thus documentation should facilitate a clear-cut process for the examiner/reader. It is advised that written work be edited before inclusion in the final digital format, with the candidate ensuring that the contents are an integrated part of the thesis.
CROSS-REFERENCING WRITTEN COMPONENT TO DVD/OTHER DIGITAL MEDIA

Within the DVD proper, cross-referencing is possible via menus, chapters and links. However, a clear cross-referencing method is also necessary between the written component and the DVD. It is important that the relevant chapter or section be clearly cited, and if video files are not separated into chapters (for example, where the candidate wishes to maintain the temporal flow of the dance), then time codes for the specific aspect being referred to should be given. Wherever reference is made to the DVD in the written text, an icon (such as a disc) can be used as an easily identifiable visual marker.

INTERACTIVE DVD: NAVIGATION AND USE

In regards to DVDs that have multiple chapters and links, it is suggested that a section be included in the written component (for example, following the contents pages) that sets out how to use the DVD. If appropriate, this could include a diagram/flow chart which maps the contents of the DVD, such as the title and chapter headings, and the contents of each chapter including movie files, still images, choreographic notes, etc. This serves as a useful visual overview that immediately illustrates both contents and navigational pathways.

CROSS-PLATFORM DVD

DVD duplication or burning is inexpensive and appropriate for personal projects requiring only a few copies. However, a problem encountered in the creation of DVDs is that they are often incompatible with some players and formats. Should financial resources be available to the candidate, it may be of benefit to seek assistance with DVD creation. DVD mastering is a digital optimisation process that enables multiple copies of a DVD while maintaining the quality of the project. Authoring is a process that creates a DVD that can be played on a DVD player. It is important to ensure the DVD can be played on a range of machines and computer operating systems before submission with the final thesis.

GOOD DOCUMENTARY PRACTICE: VIDEO POINT OF VIEW, LIGHTING AND EDITING

When filming rehearsals and live performance events, candidates should consider camera angles and point of view, not only using long shots or a single point of view, but also close-ups and tracking shots. For documenting live performances, it may be necessary to enlist the assistance of an experienced camera person to work with the choreographer/dance artist. Lighting conditions for the live event may be too dark for effective footage, thus time schedules should take into account shooting a particular scene with lighting levels set at higher percentages. Consideration of the editing process is also important here. For example, when shooting live performances, it is useful to have more than one camera capturing the event. One camera could provide footage for laying down the main video track, with angles and shots taken from other cameras edited into this main track.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

It is important that what constitutes documentation does not infringe copyright laws. For archiving purposes, it is also necessary to ensure that the appropriate acknowledgements and accreditation (including production roles, videography, photography, sound, editing and so on) appear in both the written component and digital documents.

WEB-BASED FORMATS

If documentation is web-based, the candidate needs to ensure that it is archived for the required number of years in accordance with research protocols.
Obviously these recommendations are guiding principles at the time of writing. We are aware that technology is constantly changing and so anticipate the influx of new digital formats and platforms. Whichever mode is used, it is important to remain mindful of the principles of navigation and archiving of material.

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**THE VIVA VOCE: A LOST CONVENTION OF EXAMINATION?**

*I think the oral exam is actually crucial for dancers to dissolve the lingering public perception of others that 'dancers don't talk'* (DCNZ1).

One question raised by the international consultant on this project, Susan Melrose, concerned the absence in our draft recommendations of the oral system of examination known as the ‘viva.’ As the normal culmination of the examination process in the UK, Europe and NZ, a ‘viva’ invites candidates to articulate their research trajectory and findings in dialogue with an examination panel or, in more traditional language, ‘to defend his/her thesis.’ Melrose, whose work champions the artist researcher engaged in multi-modal degrees, is concerned that the omission of the ‘viva’ might not provide the most equitable conditions for this type of candidate.

*It is at the viva examination that a skilled and sympathetic examiner is able to elicit a very convincing oral account of the project – not least because skilled arts practitioners often demonstrate advanced oral skills which are not equalled in the written component [or] the feedback to the candidate, required so that he or she can make the necessary ‘amendments and corrections’ to the written component along the lines raised at the viva, has in numerous circumstances served to enable the arts practitioner candidate, over the period of time recommended, to make strategic interventions in the writing, such that the writing serves the expert practice, rather than attempting to replicate certain tired conventions of the traditional thesis* (Melrose report).

Melrose’s point is that professional artists are trained, directly or indirectly, to speak rather than write about their work and that the viva dialogue often draws out ideas which illuminate the practice but can lie obscured in a writing straining to be ‘academic.’ This perspective aligns to a certain extent, with a New Zealand respondent who stated, of her own experience, that the “whole process was quite affirming - the exam was presented as an opportunity to really discuss my work in detail with the examiners, rather than it feeling only like a defence” (DCNZ01).

The positive weight of such comments stands less securely against the misgivings about vivas raised in the literature. Powell and Green (2003) argue that the vagaries and ambiguities apparent in the UK examination system often come to a head in intentions and procedures of vivas. The viva’s purpose is variously perceived as authenticating authorship, a rite of passage, a probe into the candidate’s ability and a confrontational challenge to the research claims, while notions of the viva’s role decision-making about the thesis’ doctorateness and examiners’ independence differ widely and are often imprecisely communicated in institutional protocols. Other UK commentators like Morley, Leonard and David (2002) note the significant numbers of students who report on the negativity of the experience even when awarded the degree. Even more disturbingly, these academics claim to have themselves witnessed vivas permeated by power struggles or sub-disciplinary disputes between examiners and/or examiners and supervisors, who in some instances are permitted to be present at the event. Inconsistencies in the rules pertaining to vivas lead Tinkler and Jackson (2000), similarly, to question the quality assurance measures in relation to higher degree examinations and thus to the fundamental consistency of doctoral processes.

By and large, Australian universities have opted out of the viva practice and chosen instead to emphasise examiner independence, upheld through the autonomy of examiners to respond to theses without interference from others’ perspectives. Independence does not allay wide variation in examiner reporting and decision-making but this approach
does obviate inter-personal disputes, leaving moderation of variations to an internal panel whose members are again at a distance from the examiners (and any interpretational clashes) but not from institution’s interests. Some universities do have final review processes, where the completing candidate orally presents their thesis to an internal panel before the final submission. This procedure enables the candidate to gauge the credibility (or otherwise) of their work and, on the institutional side, operates as a gate-keeping mechanism to prevent underdeveloped studies from exposure to the full and decisive examination process. The effectiveness of this procedure is yet to be rigorously examined, although anecdotally the process does augur well for a final successful outcome. Whether the process substitutes for Melrose’s concern to support the expert practitioner is untested and it certainly does not address the final recognition of research raised by our NZ correspondent. Sympathetic examiners with critical formative skills are in demand even in the Australian experience where interpersonal dialogue is usually filtered out. While the viva does appear to offer some advantageous aspects, the process presents as many problems as it might resolve. Whether the process substitutes for Melrose’s concern to support the expert practitioner is untested and it certainly does not address the final recognition of research raised by our NZ correspondent. Sympathetic examiners with critical formative skills are in demand even in the Australian experience where interpersonal dialogue is usually filtered out. While the viva does appear to offer some advantageous aspects, the process presents as many problems as it might resolve. How candidature is celebrated and affirmed is another question to address in the future.

Examination/assessment is a human process, subject to that tension with which this project began: dancing between diversity and consistency. There are checks and balances working towards consistency to put in place and advocacy of particular recommendations to disseminate but, in the final analysis, as humans, we are diverse and, with all the problems of management and accountability such a condition presents, diversity should be celebrated as a catalyst of knowledge. If diversity is restricted too closely, innovation is denied and growth is impoverished. Balance, a tenuous state well known by dancers, risks failure but when achieved is exhilarating and life-affirming. As educators, we should remember that we can pave the way with our acts of balance, provoking suspended states that can invite but not determine the next journey ... nor the next discovery.
CHIEF INVESTIGATORS

DR MAGGI PHILLIPS

is the coordinator of Research and Creative Practice at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, a position that enables daily access to the integration of artistic innovation and research. Her life path has crossed many disciplines and worldviews, from dancer to a world literature doctorate, circus ring to university boardroom. The WAAPA appointment fuses these disparate influences, provoking some understanding of knowledge’s variable forms and Maggi’s desire to privilege diversity across its inordinate forms.

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ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CHERYL STOCK

is Faculty Coordinator of the Creative Industries research methods unit at QUT, where her research and teaching specialisations include dance practice and theory, intercultural, interdisciplinary and site specific performance and practice-led research, in addition to being a Chief Investigator in this project. Cheryl was Head of Dance at QUT (2000-2006) and previous to that spent thirty years in the dance profession as dancer, choreographer, director and educator. Her achievements were recognised by the 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award at the Australian Dance Awards and an Australian Artists Creative Fellowship (1993-1996).

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ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR KIM VINC

Director of Deakin University’s motion capture studio (Motion.Lab) is a creative artist specialising in dance and interactive media. ALTC awards for Teaching in the Humanities and an Arts Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning in 2006 attest to the significance of Vincs’ development of innovative curricula in contemporary dance, interactive digital technologies and cross-disciplinary arts-science collaborations. As one of the pioneers of multi-modal higher degrees in dance, she continues to examine choreographic processes through interactivity and motion capture. She participated in Kate Stevens’ interdisciplinary team working on a three-year ARC Linkage project ‘Intention and Serendipity: Improvisation, Symbolism and Memory in Contemporary Australian Dance’ and has recently been awarded a three-year ARC Discovery grant to research the development of motion capture as a choreographic tool.

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RESEARCH ASSISTANTS:

Jonathan Mustard is a composer with twenty years experience making music for dance. His research focus in recent years has explored the relationship of dance to sound in the context of movement tracking technologies and sound synthesis.

Dr. Mariana Verdaasdonk is a performer, director and researcher working between Australia and Japan. Using a practice-led methodology to develop responsive environments, she is currently collaborating with visual and sound artists, dancers, and researchers in cognitive science to create an installation ‘garden-habitat’ as a means for evaluating audience experience.
Dr Katrina Rank is a dancer, educator, researcher and community dance artist. Her research interests have focussed on narrative applications in dance performance for untrained dancers and dancers with disabilities.

EDUCATION CONSULTANT:

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALLYSON HOLBROOK

is Director of the Centre for the Study of Research training and Impact (SORTI) has a research background in Educational Assessment and Evaluation, the History and Futures of Education, the History of Youth Transition and Workplace Education and Studies in Higher Education. She has a long record of teaching research methods, with a particular emphasis on qualitative methods, and of supervising research students and mentoring research staff.

In recent years she co-edited the book *Supervision of Postgraduate Research in Education* (1999) with Professor Sue Johnston, and with Associate Professor Bob Bessant co-authored *Reflections on Educational Research in Australia: A History of the Australian Association for Research in Education* (1995). She is currently leading a team of researchers in an ARC Discovery Grant project that focuses on PhD assessment.

A/Professor Holbrook has served on the executive of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) as research training coordinator, and as President of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society (ANZHES). Until recently she was a member of the Council of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and continues her association with the ACER as a member of the Standing Committee in 1999 for Educational Research.

INTERNATIONAL ADVISOR:

PROFESSOR SUSAN F MELROSE

is Professor of Performance Arts and Research Convenor, Performing Arts, in the School of Arts, Middlesex University. After completing doctoral research in performance analysis at the Sorbonne (Nlle) in the early 1980s, she established and ran postgraduate profession/vocation-linked theatre and performance studies courses at Central School of Speech and Drama and Rose Bruford College London. She has taught at universities in Turkey, France, Tunisia and Australia.

Her support for the wider acknowledgement of the complex-knowledge-status and aesthetic ownership of professional artists and their work has driven much of her teaching and research practice over the past ten years. In a number of different publications, including R Butcher and S Melrose (eds), *Rosemary Butcher: Choreography, Collisions and Collaborations*, 2005, she questions the appropriateness of certain discourse-apparatus-driven approaches to the analysis of performance, performance-making practices and expert practitioners.

In *A Semiotics of the Dramatic Text* (1994), she sought to critique literature-based approaches to theatre practices, proposing a practice-centred alternative. Her writing has contested the late-20C spread of what she calls the "new critical orthodoxies" in university-based performance studies programmes, and questions the nature of the university's ethical relationship with performance-creative professionals and arts practices. She is widely published in the fields of performance analysis, performance writing and critical semiotics. A number of presentations and keynote papers are published at [http://www.sfmelrose.u-net.com](http://www.sfmelrose.u-net.com).

Susan Melrose currently supervises or co-supervises higher and research degree candidates in areas including performance analysis, mask in performance training, professional music performance, choreographic signature, visual theatre and questions of discourse, performance documentation and "new technologies". She is particularly interested in questions of the performance disciplines' "interfaces" and interdisciplinarity; meta-practice and performance meta-languages; writing and performance.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEST PRACTICE IN DOCTORAL AND MASTERS BY RESEARCH EXAMINATION OF DANCE STUDIES IN AUSTRALIA

Below is a detailed perspective on the complete examination process following the generic guidelines for doctoral examination produced by the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies, August 2005. Because Australian higher degrees examination processes differ in some ways from those of elsewhere, their features need to be more widely understood and endorsed. The most distinctive features are:

1. External, independent expert examiners to make written recommendations to the university on the acceptability of the thesis;
2. Processes are transparent and arm's-length; and
3. The appointment of the best examiners available conditional on the parameters of studies which may involve 'live' performance/demonstration and thereby may diverge from the usual Australian requirement of international benchmarking.

In Australia, doctoral theses are examined by two or three examiners (at least one (masters) or two (doctorate) of whom must be external to the candidate’s university). Each examiner independently submits a detailed written report on the thesis covering its component parts - practice and exegesis where applicable (multi-modal) - and makes a summary recommendation to the university’s Postgraduate Studies Committee, which considers all of the reports and makes a final decision concerning the award of the degree. Most commonly, the candidate is required to make some amendments to bring the thesis (including components parts) to the highest possible standard before the university confers the degree.

Crucially, the Australian doctoral examination is a formative process — “an exercise in giving feedback in an effort to assist the candidate in further developing and improving their work” (Mullins & Kiley 2001). It is important to stress this to both examiners and candidates.

THE DOCTORAL THESIS

In order to obtain a doctorate, a doctoral student presents, using one or more media, a substantial and intellectually coherent product or product(s) known as a thesis; comprising of a written dissertation or creative artefacts/processes and exegesis (multi-modal) for submission to external examination.

The thesis constitutes the material outcomes of a sustained program of research that has produced original findings. The thesis is the evidence upon which examiners evaluate the quality of the research and the candidate's ability to communicate the significance of the research and work as an independent researcher.

The thesis constitutes a coherent and cogent argument and/or experimental investigation that communicates the significant aspects of research in practices, processes and writing undertaken in a period of time equivalent to three to four years of full time work. In a doctoral program, the thesis (including all component parts) is normally the sole basis on which the decision to award the degree is made and represents the major part of work executed in the program.

5 The original guidelines, adopted here to reflect nuances pertinent to dance studies, were developed by the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies, from surveys of members’ practices, and from several working parties. The guidelines do not supplant the policies of individual universities, but seek to inform the further development of such policies. In developing these Guidelines, the Council seeks to guide best practice. It believes that greater commonality in practice among Australian universities will lead to greater clarity in the minds – and hence the recommendations – of examiners; and a greater assurance to candidates, examiners, the public, government and other funding bodies, and employers that the highest standards are maintained across the sector.
PRIOR TO EXAMINATION OF THESSES

Candidates should be prepared for examination, informed of the criteria by which their theses will be evaluated and the form that the examination of their thesis will take.

Formal confirmations of candidature and exit seminars internally examine and even certify some elements of the candidate’s research. These neither preclude nor constrain the examiner’s autonomy. Nevertheless, universities should advise examiners of the nature of the internal institutional processes that precede the formal examination and theses must identify any published/performed work by the candidate that is included in the thesis.

PRESENTATION OF THESIS

Before the thesis is submitted for examination, the candidate (with the guidance of their supervisors) should ensure that a very high standard of scholarly and artistic (where applicable) presentation has been achieved. This includes ensuring that the thesis:

- Presents a title/subtitle indicative of its content;
- Includes an Abstract or Summary that gives a clear and accurate account of its main design/arguments, methodology/experimentation, and scope;
- Uses academic and/or articulate language appropriate to the discipline (guided by journal/dance publications). In the case of multi-modal degrees, the purposes of the research may be served by the use of different voices/languages to convey the intention or even the argument of the investigation;
- The written component is free of typographical and grammatical errors;
- Any ‘live’ performance, process demonstration or artwork needs to be of a professional level of technical delivery coherent with the medium/media of presentation and the articulated resources of the study;
- The final reproduction quality of performance and process documentation (usually digital) is sufficient to enable examiners (as a memory aid to ‘live’ components or as an artefact in itself) to assess all aspects of the work. Such documentation is preserved in the library as a record of the contribution to knowledge and stand as an example of the university’s standards;
- Extraneous material does not detract from the presentation of the findings, research design and/or the argument; and
- Universities should set upper limits on the length of written theses and exegesis components for each higher degree program they offer.

A thesis may, in most institutions, be presented in a digital format but once again coherency and clarity need to be guiding factors. Digital formats will become increasingly beneficial for dance studies in enabling audio-visual material to be included as citations or examples to illustrate investigations but as in written and performance components, digital formats need to acquire a technical level of execution that is exemplary and articulates the research for examiners and future researchers.

An important element of research training is the acquisition of skills in the scholarly and artistic presentation of research. A masters or doctoral thesis must demonstrate these skills at a very high level.

Every discipline should provide candidates, supervisors, and examiners explicit technical guidelines for presentation in all components of a thesis.

Theses should be printed on both sides of the paper wherever practicable.

Conciseness is an important element of good scholarly communication. Over-length theses seldom find favour with examiners. Material that is supportive of the main findings of the thesis may be placed in an Appendix; if lengthy, such material may be more usefully presented in an appropriate medium, such as CD/DVD.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IN THE THESIS OF THE WORK OF OTHERS

Candidates must preface their thesis with a signed affirmation that, to the best of their knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously performed, published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis/exegesis.

- Collaborations for performance/artworks are likely to be incorporated into the study, particularly but not limited to multimodal theses. It is incumbent on the candidate to clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of each collaborator. Examiners must be fully aware of these contributions to make their assessment of the candidate’s achievements.
- The Council’s Policy on Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors should be considered for adoption by member institutions. [Link](http://www.ddogs.edu.au/cgi-bin/papers.pl?cmd=d&fid=33347)

The candidate must also affirm that the material in the thesis has not been the basis of the award of any other degree or diploma except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis and formal permission has been received from the relevant university committee or officer.

Since the doctoral thesis is normally the sole basis for the award the degree and since the originality of the research is a defining feature of the doctoral degree, examiners must have all necessary information to be able to judge the extent to which the most significant work presented in the thesis is the candidate’s own.

Research in most disciplines is increasingly conducted in teams or by informal collaboration, and research candidates are encouraged to access assistance beyond their supervisory panel including technical, editorial, or statistical support provided by their university, external collaborators or even commercial providers.

Universities should also establish clear guidelines for the amount of work done outside the supervised period of research that may be incorporated in the thesis. In dance, partnerships to resource professional performance are likely to come under consideration here. Such initiatives are acceptable as long as contributors are meticulously acknowledged.

EXAMINERS

Masters’ theses must be examined by two examiners at least one of whom is external to the university of presentation and doctoral theses must be examined by at least two examiners who are external to the university in which the thesis is presented.

- Each university should make public its criteria and its processes for the nomination and appointment of examiners.
- Candidates must be given an explicit opportunity to provide a written list (giving reasons, wherever possible) of individual (and/or categories of) examiners who they believe would be inappropriate.
- In some universities, candidates may be invited to participate in a discussion with their supervisors and other appropriate staff about the composition of a panel of names from which the examiners to be chosen by the university will be selected.

At the conclusion of the examining process, examiners should be

- Formally thanked; and
- Informed of the outcome of the examination, and sent (on request) de-identified copies of other examiners’ reports. This procedure can be a useful element in examiner training.

Dancing between diversity and consistency respondents observed that examiners ideally should possess the following attributes: an ability to be fair and assess work against the work’s stated research design; be conceptually discriminating and intellectually flexible; have expertise in the knowledge of the practice and/or area of research; be supportive in his/her collegial attitude and enthusiastic about innovation and risk-taking; have the time and self-reflexivity to consider the work and be fearless.
Examiners perform a very significant service to the candidate, the university, to the discipline, and to the research community. This should be borne in mind by the university when choosing examiners and communicating with them, and by examiners in accepting and fulfilling the duty.

The relationship between the university and examiners must always be professional and at arm’s-length. The independence of examiners is a critical feature of the Australian doctoral examination.

Many universities recommend and/or mandate an international representative, however, while in many instances desirable, for multi-modal degrees restricted resources may prohibit international examiners being brought in to witness the ‘live’ performance/process component. Some universities are moving towards reliance on digital documentation as acceptable for one of the three examiners, however, consideration must be given to this method on a case-by-case basis.

EXPERTISE OF EXAMINERS

Expertise in the field of research is the principal consideration in the selection of examiners.

Examiners usually should have appropriate academic credentials (especially expertise in the research area and/or methodology of the thesis).

Multi-modal degrees highlight the relationship between academia and the professional dance industry, making a case for the integration of doctoral-qualified examiners to examine in parallel with expert practitioners from the industry. Some tension remains in this alignment due to different expectations of a university-based study from that of performances/artworks in the industry. However, it is recommended that expert practitioners can play a vital role in specific assessments and their participation is likely to support a continuing fluidity between the two sectors.

A brief statement to the central committee (or officer) who approves examiner nominations that gives the reasons why each examiner is being nominated is recommended.

The statement of the reasons for nominating particular examiners may be useful when considering conflicting reports, particularly in the case of multidisciplinary theses. Some universities require a statement only when expertise is not evident from the nature of an examiner’s current appointment.

EXPERIENCE OF EXAMINERS

Examiners should:

- Normally hold a degree equivalent to that which they are examining; and
- Have substantial recent research or relevant professional experience relevant to the thesis examination process: at least one member of each examining panel should have experience in the examination and/or supervision of Australian Masters/Doctoral theses.

The lack of an equivalent degree should not be an absolute disqualification but if one is not held, the university must be satisfied that the examiner has appropriate qualifications, expertise, and experience to examine research higher degree theses at this level.
CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN THE EXAMINATION

It is crucial that all examiners act, and are seen to act, with integrity so that they can assure quality to the institution, to the research community, to the discipline, and to the public.

- Before accepting a thesis for examination, examiners must be asked to declare that they have no conflict of interest with the candidate, supervisor, or project and
- Examiners with readily identifiable conflicts of interest should not be nominated.

Conflicts of interest are more likely to become apparent to examiners if they are sent an abstract or summary of the main approach and findings of the thesis before agreeing to examine. This is strongly recommended.

Potential examiners who should be excluded (or decline to examine) include those:

- Who have had substantial direct involvement in the candidate’s work;
- Who believe they are likely to fail the thesis on the basis of the research paradigm or methodology;
- Who have supervised this or another thesis by the candidate;
- Who are close working colleagues of the candidate; and
- Who have co-authored a paper or co-created an artwork with the candidate; or whose own work is the focus of the research project.
- The supervisor must not be an examiner.

Where the candidate is also a staff member of the university (or has a close association with it), it is strongly recommended that all examiners be external to that university.

Universities should establish clear guidelines about what might constitute conflict of interest. Some universities set a period (e.g., five years) that must have elapsed since an external examiner has had any formal attachment to, or significant presence in, the department or the location of the candidate’s research or employment.

Because good supervisors encourage candidates to present their work and to network with the relevant research community, it is likely that candidates may have met, and discussed some aspects of the thesis with, researchers who are subsequently nominated as examiners; these discussions may have contributed to the thesis. This alone would not, prima facie, constitute conflict of interest. “Substantial direct involvement” with the supervisor, candidate, and/or project is usually the test.

ORAL EXAMINATIONS

Where oral examinations are mandated or optional, candidates must be informed:

- At enrolment of their purpose, nature and the extent of their use; and
- Of how, and under what conditions, they may be requested; and provided with good preparation for the event.

The additional use of oral examinations may be appropriate in some cases, but an oral examination must not in any case replace the formal written reports by examiners.

Oral examinations may be used to supplement the written reports to:
CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

The thesis

Examiners must not divulge any (unpublished) content or findings of the thesis – before or after the examination – without the consent of the author. The thesis under examination is a confidential document in whatever form in which it is presented.

A thesis is sent to examiners for the sole purpose of examination and is a privileged document carrying obligations to preserve and protect its confidentiality.

Universities may offer candidates the option of an examination that is more formally confidential if legal, commercial, or cultural issues justify it. In this case, examiners will be required to sign an undertaking of confidentiality before receiving the thesis.

The candidate

There must be no contact between candidates and examiners during the period in which the examiners are preparing their written reports; if inadvertent contact occurs, it is never appropriate to discuss any aspect of the thesis or its examination.

The involvement of students in the selection of examiners and/or the stage at which they are informed of the identity of their examiners varies between (and perhaps within) universities. In the majority of Australian universities, the names of examiners are not revealed to the candidate during the examination. Examiners should be informed of the university’s practice.

The examiners

Each examiner must submit an independent report.

In multi-modal degrees, examiners are likely to be assembled together for viewing performance or process. It is assumed that they will maintain professional etiquette and guard their independence on these occasions.

Where the university permits it, examiners may consult with each other only via an approved process (preferably through the Dean or Chair of the appropriate committee); and after reading and witnessing the component parts of the thesis but before submitting their report.

If universities offer examiners the option of concealing their identity from the candidate, examiners should be informed that Freedom of Information legislation might limit the effectiveness of this option.

The independence of examiners from the university, the candidate, and each other is a keystone feature of Australian masters’ and doctoral examinations.

If consultation between examiners occurs, a statement of the nature and extent of the consultation should be reported to the university along with (but separate from) the examiners’ reports.

Examiners should consider very carefully before requesting anonymity, because the benefits of the Australian doctoral examination system include:

- Inducting graduates into the research community; and
- Providing networking opportunities for candidates; and transparency of process.
DURATION OF EXAMINATION

When invited to examine, examiners must indicate their willingness and ability to submit their reports to the university in a timely manner. If they are unable to do so:

- The university should find another examiner; or
- If the particular examiner is crucial to the examination, the student (and, if necessary the candidate’s funding body or employer) must be informed that there will be a delay.

If it becomes apparent that the original agreed return date cannot be met, an examiner must negotiate a realistic revised due date with the university as soon as possible. If the new return date is significantly later than the original, the university should inform the candidate (and, if necessary the candidate’s funding body or employer) and give consideration to appointing a replacement (reserve) examiner.

Timing is probably the most vexing issue for candidates and administrators. The period of thesis examination is an extremely stressful time for candidates whose careers, job applications, promotions, and other significant life-choices depend upon a timely outcome. Examiners must be conscious of this when they agree to examine within the time requested by the university.

When examiners are appointed, at least one reserve examiner should be nominated. If an examiner fails to meet the renegotiated return date or the proposed date is unacceptably late (considering the candidate’s circumstances), the university must consider using the reserve examiner or appointing a new one, although this alternative does not necessarily guarantee a timely conclusion to the examination.

Australian universities have a number of different protocols in place for the timing of submission of the different components of the thesis.

The general consensus attends to the philosophical intertwining of practice and writing and hence recommends a reasonable proximity between exposures to the two components for examiners, normally up to six months. Too big a gap does suggest a candidate may be disadvantaged even though some institutions maintain alternative procedures.

Visual arts’ academics tend to favour submission of the exegesis prior to the viewing of the art works but this procedure rules out the element of evaluative reflection that performance modes consider as integral to critical performance research. This variance is no doubt a by-product of the relative immediacy of spectator response in performance and, consequently should be understood as a discipline specific element of methodology.

PERFORMANCE OR THE ‘LIVE’ ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT/EXAMINATION

Audience presence is a natural environment for performance and it is generally recommended that examination of the performance component takes place within that environment. However, this situation varies dependent on the study in question: a ‘live’ presentation of process may, for instance, be justifiably accommodated in a presentation solely for the examining panel.

The circulation of a ‘framing’ research design document, outlining the research questions, intentions and processes of the study is perceived as crucial to the examination process of any ‘live’ component. Examiners need to be given as clear a picture of what they are being asked to examine before witnessing the ‘live’ practice. It is the prerogative of individual examiners to choose to delay the reading of the ‘framing’ document if they so wish.

Interpretations/ideas may shift in the intervening time of evaluation - and be articulated in the written component/exegesis - but the original thrust of the research in practice plays a vital role in the examiners’ capacity to assess the research’s effectiveness and significance in performance/demonstration environments.
CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE

The university’s criteria for the award of its research higher degrees must be available to candidates, supervisors, examiners, and others. The criteria should include:

- Value of original contribution to knowledge in the field: its value to other researchers, originality, aesthetic insight/publishability, applicability, and (potential) impact;
- Engagement with the literature and the work of others;
- Grasp of methodology or processes of creation;
- Capacity for independent, critical thinking; and
- A coherent research program, including its experimental design, arguments and conclusions; quality of presentation, taking into consideration the limits of production resources.

The criteria must enable an examiner to distinguish clearly in scope and quality between a doctorate and a research Masters degree. The university’s criteria may have discipline-specific addenda.

EXAMINERS’ REPORTS

- Each examiner’s report must be sufficiently detailed and comprehensive to fulfil both the summative and formative objectives of the thesis examination. A report that is shorter than two pages is unlikely to serve these purposes.
- The report should discuss both the strengths and the weaknesses of the thesis.
- In multi-modal degrees, examiners should be encouraged to devote as much attention as is possible to the practice/s involved and to the integration of the practice and the writing.
- While examiners recommend rather than determine examination outcomes, an examiner’s recommendation must not be overturned or overlooked lightly.
- An examiner may submit a confidential addendum to the university.

Examiner reports are critically important:

- summatively, to the university in reaching its decision about the outcome of the examination;
- formatively, to the candidate in bringing the thesis to the highest possible standard for the award and in pursuing their future research, publications, and career.

The transparency of Australian doctoral examinations includes the provision of – in almost all circumstances – full copies (with examiners’ names concealed in some cases) to enable candidates to make their corrections and responses in full knowledge of the examiners’ assessment and as an enduring record for their own career files.

Because the archival copy of the thesis – normally preserved in the university library – is, inter alia, a record of the university’s standards for the award of the degree, it is important that one outcome of the examination process is a thesis that reflects the university’s standards.

Candidates should:

- Be given clear, written guidance about what must be done to make the thesis satisfactory for the award of the degree; and
- Address all reasonable recommendations by examiners for the improvement of the thesis before the degree is conferred.

This requirement raises challenges for practice research, if involving compositional revisions because of resources needed to remount a performance and/or section of the performance. However, where revision can be made within workshopping conditions, such revision should be encouraged for the knowledge value to the researcher as well as for the discipline and subsequently documented as an addendum to the performance documentation.
EXAMINERS' SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Examiners' reports must be accompanied by summary recommendation to the university's decision-making bodies on the level of acceptability of the thesis.

It is recommended that the summary report offer examiners five un-numbered options:

- Confer the degree without any amendments;
- Confer the degree when minor amendments have been made and certified by a local authority (e.g., Head of School) within one to three months. For multi-modal degrees, the process may include adjustments to minor aspects of the performance/processes which should be duly documented and included in the final lodgement of the thesis;
- Confer the degree when substantive amendments have been made and certified by a local authority, or by the examiner, within three to six months; or when questions submitted by the examiner to the university regarding the work in the thesis have been answered to the satisfaction of the examiner. Again, for multi-modal degrees, the process may include substantial adjustments to aspect/s of the performance/processes which if accepted should be duly documented and included in the final lodgement of the thesis;
- Revise the thesis, and after a period (12 months) of further research, substantial reorganisation, or reconceptualisation [including performance component where applicable], submit it for re-examination by (wherever possible) the examiners who recommended this outcome; or
- Fail, with no opportunity to revise and resubmit. An examiner making this recommendation may be asked to advise the university whether it might consider the award of a lower degree.

It must be clear to examiners that their summary recommendations provide guidance on what needs to be done rather than a summative score, grade, or rating for the thesis. To emphasise this to examiners and candidates, universities should avoid the use of (a), (b), (c) or numbered recommendations.

It is strongly recommended that examiners be told how long the candidate will normally be given to make each category of correction. The periods indicated here are the most common among Australian universities.

Universities must establish explicit and transparent processes for handling examiners' recommendations and for reaching an agreed level of acceptability of the thesis. The responsibility for the acceptance of the thesis and the awarding of the degree lies clearly with the university.

SYNTHESIS OF INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATE

When one or more examiners recommend substantive amendments to the thesis, the university should appoint an internal Chief Examiner (such as the Head of School or nominee) to work with the principal supervisor and candidate to produce an integrated list of revisions that must be made before the thesis is certified by a local authority, or by the examiner, or revised and resubmitted for re-examination.

DISCREPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Each university must make known to all parties (including examiners) before the examination begins its clearly enunciated transparent processes for handling discrepant examiners' recommendations.

If the delegated university-level committee or officer is unable to resolve discrepant recommendations, an additional examiner or an adjudicator should be appointed.
An adjudicator or an additional examiner must be a senior researcher in the field, and experienced in the assessment of Australian doctoral theses, and external to the university.

The internal process for resolving discrepant examiners’ recommendations must involve a university-level committee or officer acting with or without submissions from supervisors, candidate, Head of School etc, as deemed appropriate.

There are two external processes in common use for resolving discrepant decisions:

- An additional examiner, who receives the thesis but not the reports of previous examiners. The university must set out how the report of the additional examiner will be used to affect the outcome.
- An adjudicator who, after reading the thesis and the examiners’ reports, advises the relevant university committee that will make the final decision.

REVISED AND RESUBMITTED THESSES

A candidate is permitted to revise and resubmit a thesis when the university decides that:

- It contains flaws that have the potential to affect its substantive conclusions; and
- These flaws can only be remedied by a significant period of further research, rewriting, reorganisation and/or reconceptualisation; and
- If the additional specified work is done satisfactorily, the thesis is likely to fulfil the requirements of the doctorate.

It is therefore desirable that the re-examination be conducted by the examiners who originally made this recommendation and whose advice has formed the basis of the recommendations to the candidate for the remediation of the thesis.

The examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis must be made aware of the:

- University’s substantive advice to the candidate for the revision of the thesis (this might include copies of the original examiners’ reports and must include the integrated list of agreed revisions);
- Comprehensive statement from the candidate outlining the substantive changes that have been made to the original thesis and a concise defence against any recommendations for changes that have not been accepted; and
- University’s policies and procedures for dealing with revised & resubmitted theses.

The most difficult issue in relation to Revised & Resubmitted theses is the extent to which it is reasonable for examiners to raise new areas of substantive concern.

While a revised and resubmitted thesis is not normally regarded as being presented for an entirely new examination, it is certainly possible that the work done in the task of such a major revision might alter the substantive conclusions of the thesis.

In such cases, new areas of substantive concern that would prevent the immediate award of the degree may become apparent. Irrespective of the specifications of the original examiners and the advice of the university committee, the revised and resubmitted thesis must satisfy the university’s criteria for the award of the degree.

If examiners’ reports on the original thesis are made available to other examiners, permission may need to be sought from the candidate (who might argue that they are prejudicial) and the examiners; at the very least, examiners need to be informed in advance that this is the university’s practice.

Australian universities do not normally permit a revised and resubmitted thesis to be revised and resubmitted a second time.
EXAMINER TRAINING

Training for inexperienced examiners should be provided as part of supervisor training programs.

Because of the relative 'newness' of multi-modal arts research, investigators of the Dancing Between Diversity and Consistency consider examiner training to be a priority and recommend the regular institutionally based workshops, mentorship programs, circulation of de-identified examiner reports and the development of examiner/supervisor/postgraduate symposia to exchange ideas and foster critical articulation skills. These symposia should embrace academics/practitioners of the more traditional theses so as to benefit by the diversity of approaches in the discipline of dance.

APPEALS

All research higher degree candidates must be made aware of the university’s appeals procedures.

Appeals are normally directed to matters of process and not matters of academic judgment. Quality of supervision is not a ground for appealing the outcome of a thesis examination.

THE STATUS OF THE THESIS AFTER THE EXAMINATION

- It is a condition of the award of the degree that an enduring copy or record (“archival copy”) of all component parts of the thesis is provided to and retained by the university.
- This copy will normally be in the public domain, normally now collated digitally by the Australian Digital Theses data-base.
- Each university must have clear guidelines for considering requests to delay or limit access to a thesis (in whole or in part).
- Only in very exceptional circumstances set out in the university’s guidelines, and with the approval of the appropriate university body or officer, should public access be delayed beyond a limited period.
- The candidate must retain copyright in the thesis.

Doctoral theses are an important contribution to knowledge and therefore, wherever possible, the outcomes of that contribution should be disseminated.

At the very least, a copy of the thesis (including an enduring record of all material assessed for the award of the degree) should be placed in the public domain: this is customarily in the university library.

Increasingly, theses are made digitally available (in whole or in part) through, for instance, the Australian Digital Theses Project.
Aalten, Anna. (2005) "Excellence and well being in the performing arts". Presentation to the ELIA Teacher’s Academy, Rotterdam, 14th April, 2005.


