
Withholding of Theses Procedure

1. Purpose

This Procedure sets out the University's requirements in relation to withholding a Thesis once a degree has been awarded and give effect to section 7.5 of the [Doctoral Regulations](#) and clause 4(g) of the [Master's Theses Regulation](#).

2. Application of Procedure

This Procedure applies to:

- Students who submit theses that must be deposited in the University Library as a requirement of the degree; and
- Staff Members who supervise those Students; and
- Staff Members who administer the Procedure.

Procedure Content

3. Thesis embargo

3.1 The awarding of Doctoral and Master's Thesis Degrees require confirmation that the Thesis has been deposited in the University Library. Candidates, and in some cases their supervisors, can apply to withhold public access (embargo) to a Thesis if there are exceptional circumstances. These circumstances usually relate to the Thesis containing confidential or sensitive information which means the embargo must:

- (a) aid protection of intellectual property including pending commercialisation, filing for a patent or planned publication; or
- (b) ensure that any contractual or other obligations with outside organisations can be met; or
- (c) meet good reason under the provisions of the Privacy Act 2020 or the Official Information Act 1982 or both for refusing to make the contents of the Thesis available to others.

3.2 A Thesis is usually embargoed for a maximum of two years. If a candidate or their supervisor believes that this period may be insufficient (particularly in relation to personal or participant safety), then the scope and nature of the thesis should be reconsidered. The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research (Dean, FGR) should also be advised.

3.3 Sections 3.1 and 3.2 do not apply to Theses with a creative component (see Doctoral Regulations 7.1.g, 7.1.h, 13.6.c; Master's Thesis Regulations 4.a, 4.e). Any such Thesis is deposited in the University Library under special conditions set out in Appendix 1. Candidates can choose to opt out of the special conditions.

4. Application and approval process

4.1 An application to embargo a Thesis can be made either by the candidate or by the supervisor if the candidate knows the application is being made.

4.2 Applications must:

- (a) be made as soon as the need to embargo is identified;
- (b) use the Thesis Embargo form in Panoho; and
- (c) not be for longer than two years.

4.3 The Dean, FGR:

- (a) is responsible for considering applications; and
- (b) will only approve applications if there is good reason to embargo the Thesis.

4.4 The candidate and the supervisor will be advised of the Dean's decision in writing.

4.5 Copies of the decision will also be provided to the Head of School, the University Library, the FGR Thesis Examinations Team, and the Associate Dean (PGR).

5. Other actions

5.1 The candidate retains the right to access their embargoed Thesis. Others may be granted access by the Dean, FGR in exceptional circumstances. The candidate must submit a request to allow others to access the embargoed Thesis, which includes their reason for allowing the access, to the Dean, FGR in writing.

5.2 The candidate and FGR will be advised by the University Library when the embargo period is due to expire. FGR will liaise with the supervisor or school as appropriate. An application to extend an approved embargo must be made to the Dean, FGR before the expiry of the approved embargo period.

5.3 Decisions made by the Dean, FGR under this Procedure may be appealed to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research.

5.4 When the candidate leaves the University, it is their responsibility to ensure that the University's student portal Pūaha has a valid email address for future contact.

6. Library deposit

6.1 Where an embargo has been granted the following will apply:

- (a) The Thesis will be deposited with the Library through the Self Deposit service, this will include an electronic copy of the thesis, a redacted version if there are copyright/privacy issues and the written confirmation of the embargo being granted.
- (b) The Thesis will be stored in the Institutional Repository where access is restricted to repository administrators.
- (c) The Thesis metadata will be discoverable through the Library's Discovery service (Te Waharoa) where the abstract is suppressed unless FGR instructs the Library to withhold the thesis from being discovered. During the embargo period, the Thesis will not be interloaned to other libraries.

6.2 When the withholding period expires, the Library must confirm that no application or decision to extend the embargo has been made before they make the Thesis publicly available.

7. Definitions

In this Procedure, unless the context otherwise requires:

Good reason means the reasons for refusing to publish the content of a thesis are consistent with the provisions of the Privacy Act (2020) or the Official Information Act (1982).

Thesis means the outcome of independent research, scholarship, and/or creative activity conducted under academic supervision and having a value of 90 points or more. For works of design, creation or performance, the work should include a written commentary.

Related Documents and Information

8. Related Documents

[Education and Training Act 2020](#)

[Official information Act 1982](#)

[Privacy Act 2020](#)

[Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961](#)

[Doctoral Regulations: for PhD and other Doctorate with Theses](#)

[Master's Thesis Regulations](#)

9. Document Management and Control

Essential Record

Approver	Tumu Maruārangi – Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research
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Policy Owner	Dean, Faculty of Graduate Research

Modification History

Date	Approval Agency	Details
28 November 2025	Tumu Maruārangi – Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research	Full review

Appendix 1: Creative Component of Thesis Special Conditions

1. Context

- 1.1 The International Institute of Modern Letters (IIML) hosts the University's Creative Writing programme. Theses that result from this programme are primarily creative works, for example book-length manuscripts (poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction), or the text of full-length works for stage or screen.
- 1.2 Similarly, Theses in Literary Translation and in a small number of other fields may include a creative component that might be published or produced commercially.
- 1.3 In order to allow candidates the time required to seek a publisher or producer for their works, and ensure that any creative work which deals with sensitive topics will not be accessible, these Theses are not deposited in the University Library in the same way as other Theses.

2. Special conditions

- 2.1 On deposit the critical component of a PhD Thesis will typically be openly accessible with no restrictions, unless the embargo process outlined in clause 3 is followed.
- 2.2 On deposit of the creative component of a PhD Thesis or a Masters Thesis, students will be given the following options:
 - (a) To restrict access to the creative component for a period of time up to 75 years, or
 - (b) To have their creative component openly available immediately.
- 2.3 Candidates can opt out of the conditions in 2.1 and 2.2 and make their entire Thesis restricted in perpetuity, with minimal metadata available, and no abstracts, with the approval of the Director of the IIML (for Theses in Creative Writing) or by the appropriate Head of School (for Theses in other disciplines).