
Granting Qualifications under Extraordinary Circumstances – Procedures

1. Purpose

These Procedures set out the University's process for granting a qualification to a student who has experienced extraordinary circumstances and give effect to section 7.1(c)(ii) of the General Academic Statute. These Procedures include the University's approach to posthumously granting qualifications to a student who has died.

2. Application of Procedures

These Procedures apply to staff and to students who are close to completion of their qualification but are unable to finish due to extraordinary circumstances, such as terminal illness, severe permanent injury or because they have died.

Procedures Content

3. Principles

3.1 Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington recognises that the decision to grant a qualification to a student under extraordinary circumstances is a matter that requires careful consideration. From an academic perspective, the granting of qualifications speaks to the need to maintain high academic standards. From the perspective of students, and their whānau/family, an academic qualification is a matter of pride and a reason for celebration.

3.2 In this context, the University recognises that there are situations where a student may be impacted by extraordinary circumstances and no longer be able to complete a qualification. In such situations, it may be compassionate and fair to recognise the achievements of the student concerned through the granting of their qualification. The University recognises that the processes to grant a qualification under these Procedures should be conducted with sensitivity and compassion and in a way that:

- (a) reflects the wishes of the student, and where appropriate, their next of kin; and
- (b) safeguards the emotional well-being of the student and/or their whānau/family; and
- (c) takes account of relevant cultural considerations.

3.3 The approach taken to students and their next of kin and whānau/family in these Procedures aligns with the Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute of Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. It also aligns with the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 and the Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments Policy.

4. Eligible students

4.1 In order to be considered under these provisions, a student must have extraordinary circumstances that mean they can no longer continue their studies. Extraordinary circumstances include a student having:

- (a) died during their studies; or
- (b) been diagnosed with a terminal illness; or

- (c) a permanent disability that has developed or progressed during their study and cannot be mitigated by reasonable accommodations, meaning they cannot continue or ever return their studies.
- 4.2 Appropriate medical evidence of the student's extraordinary circumstances is required, such as a death certificate or medical documentation which confirms that a student is no longer able to continue their studies because of their health condition.
- 4.3 In addition, the student must meet academic criteria as follows:
- (a) have completed a significant majority of the work required to complete the requirements of their qualification (see sections 8 – 9); and
 - (b) would have, in the judgement of the relevant academic Faculty leaders, been expected to have otherwise successfully completed the qualification.

Note: Where a student who meets the eligibility criteria in section 4.1 has met all the requirements of the qualification in which they were enrolled, the Manager, Graduation Services will consult and make appropriate arrangements relating to the granting of the qualification and presentation of the Certificate. See section 10.

5. The student and their representative

- 5.1 All contact should be with the student except where:
- (a) the student has explicitly given permission for another person to be involved or to act on their behalf; or
 - (b) the student's condition is such that another person is now the legal representative for their affairs; or
 - (c) the student has died, in which case, contact is with the next of kin.
- 5.2 For the purposes of these Procedures, the relevant next of kin member or identified legal representative of the student, is described below as the student's representative.
- (a) In the case of (b) or (c), the student or, where applicable, the student's representative can request in writing that a different person is the primary contact with the University.

6. Initiating a process to potentially grant a qualification

- 6.1 The process for investigating whether a qualification can be granted can be initiated through the following mechanisms:
- (a) By the student or their representative through a request to one of the following:
 - (i) the relevant Student Success Manager, or for a doctoral degree or a thesis-based master's degree, the Manager, Faculty of Graduate Research; or
 - (ii) the relevant Associate Dean.
 - (b) Any staff member who is familiar with the student's situation or has been involved in providing academic or pastoral advice or support, and who believes the student may meet the criteria in section 4, may raise the issue with the relevant Student Success Manager, or in the case of a thesis-based degree, the Manager, Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR).
- 6.2 The Manager, Faculty of Graduate Research or the Student Success Manager works with the Dean Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) and/or relevant Associate Dean as appropriate, and with the Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team and other relevant staff, such as those supporting International Students, or Head(s) of School, to review the student's situation in the context of the criteria in section 4.

- (a) Where the student clearly does not meet the criteria in section 4, the process stops. If it was initiated by a staff member, they are informed by the Manager, Faculty of Graduate Research or the Student Success Manager. If the process was initiated by the student or their representative, the outcome will be communicated to them in accordance with section 7.
- (b) Where the student's situation appears to meet the criteria in section 4, to the extent that it is appropriate to proceed, the process set out in section 8 (for thesis-based qualifications) or 9 (for other qualifications), will be followed.

7. Points of contact with the student and their representative

- 7.1 Staff at the University should proceed with the utmost care and consideration in cases where these procedures apply. The Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team should take the lead in coordinating an approach with the student and their representative.
- 7.2 Staff must ensure that they do not raise the expectations of the student and/or their representative before the processes in section 8 have been completed, even if the initial review has indicated that the student may qualify for an award under these Procedures.
- 7.3 The Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team will work closely with the relevant Student Success Manager or Associate Dean, or in the case of a student completing a master's or doctoral thesis, the Dean FGR, in managing family communication.
 - (a) Other staff may also be involved for example:
 - (i) Where appropriate, the following should be consulted and involved as they see fit:
 - Āwhina in the case of a Māori student
 - Pasifika Student Success in the case of a Pasifika student
 - Te Amaru-Disability Services in the case of a student with a disability.
 - (ii) Where the student concerned is an International Student, or a domestic student who has been studying offshore, then relevant staff from International Student Experience and Wellington University International should be involved.
 - (b) For all students, the coordination of the University approach should include the relevant staff in the faculty and school(s).
 - (c) The University staff identified above should work with the student or their representative to determine the best way to coordinate communication. Consideration should be given in this instance to:
 - (i) identifying how the University can minimise and coordinate the staff in contact with the student or their representative; and
 - (ii) ensure that the University contact person(s) can respond appropriately to the language, culture or unique needs of the student or their representative.
 - (d) If consideration of whether a qualification can be granted was initiated by a staff member, then the initial communication with the student or their representative should ask whether they want to proceed with the process of granting a qualification under these Procedures.

8. Academic requirements for a thesis-based qualification to be granted

- 8.1 The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research ('Dean FGR') may give consideration to the granting of a doctorate or thesis-based master's degree under these Procedures, if:

- (a) an almost completed draft of the thesis is available and any missing content can be readily derived from what the candidate has already written; or
 - (b) a penultimate draft of the thesis is completed and only routine editing is required; or
 - (c) the thesis has been submitted for examination; or
 - (d) in the case of doctoral theses, the thesis has been examined, but the oral defence has not been held; or
 - (e) the oral defence of a doctorate has been completed with the outcome that the doctorate should be awarded or awarded subject to minor changes, but the thesis is not yet deposited in the University Library.
- 8.2 The process for considering the award of a thesis-based degree under these Procedures involves the Dean FGR establishing a committee, comprising the relevant Associate Dean, the University supervisor and the primary supervisor (if this is not the same person as the University supervisor), and one other member of the Faculty of Graduate Research Board.
- 8.3 The Dean FGR may add other members to this committee as is judged appropriate and seek further advice from other staff as required.
- 8.4 Where the thesis is not yet complete, as in paragraph 8.1(i) or 8.1(ii) of these Procedures, the Committee may recommend to the Dean FGR:
- (a) that the thesis go forward for examination in its existing form; or
 - (b) that a third party be requested to proof-read or edit the thesis, according to guidelines established by the Committee, prior to the thesis going forward for examination; or
 - (c) that the thesis is not sufficiently advanced to allow it to go forward for examination.
- 8.5 With a recommendation that the thesis should proceed to examination, the Committee will arrange for a suitable version of the thesis to be submitted for examination.
- 8.6 The committee should ensure that the examiner of any student work understands the context for marking any student work subject to these Procedures, is comfortable with assessing the student's work in this context, and has their own pastoral or cultural support systems should they be required.
- 8.7 Where the thesis has already been submitted for examination, the Committee will receive and consider the examiners' reports. The Committee may consult with the examiners to determine the outcome.
- 8.8 The Committee may subsequently recommend to the Dean FGR:
- (a) that the degree be granted without any modifications to the thesis and with any requirement for an oral defence being waived; or
 - (b) that the degree be granted subject to proof-reading or editing by a third party according to guidelines set out by the Committee and with the oral defence being waived; or
 - (c) that, in the case of doctoral degrees, that a master's degree be granted instead, under conditions which the Committee determines; or
 - (d) that no degree be granted.
- 8.9 Where the recommendation is that proofreading or editing of the thesis be undertaken by a third party, the Dean FGR will arrange this in consultation with the Committee. Where the thesis is completed by a third party, this should be noted in the copy of the thesis that is deposited in the University Library.

- 8.10 Where the Dean FGR decides that the degree can be granted, the thesis must be deposited in the University Library in accordance with the Library Statute.

9. The granting of other qualifications

- 9.1 The relevant Associate Dean along with the relevant Head(s) of School may give consideration to approving the granting of a non-thesis-based qualification under these Procedures in the following circumstances:
- (a) the student required no more than the lesser of 60 points or one sixth of the points required for the qualification; and
 - (b) in the case of a bachelor's degree, the student had passed at least one of the of the 300-level courses required for their major.
- 9.2 The student does not need to have been registered in the courses required to complete the qualification.
- 9.3 Consideration may be given to granting a qualification that is less complete than specified above, but where the qualification is still deemed to be substantially complete.
- 9.4 The Associate Dean shall consult with relevant Head(s) of School, and other staff as appropriate, and make a recommendation to the Vice-Provost (Academic), who shall decide whether the qualification should be granted.

10. The collection of a Qualification Certificate when granted under extraordinary circumstances

- 10.1 After the University Council has granted the qualification, there are several options available to the student or their representative for the collection of the Certificate. It can be:
- (a) posted direct to the student or their representative; or
 - (b) presented to the student or their representative at a graduation ceremony; or
 - (c) presented to the student or their representative by a University representative at a private ceremony.

11. Reporting and Communication

- 11.1 Upon deciding that a qualification is to be granted under these Procedures, the Vice-Provost (Academic) or the Dean FGR is responsible for ensuring the following persons are advised:
- (d) Student Interest and Conflict Resolution team and/or the University staff in communication with the student and/or their family/whānau;
 - (e) The relevant Student Success Manager or the Manager Faculty of Graduate Research as appropriate; and
 - (f) The Manager, Graduation.
- 11.2 The University staff in communication with the student or their representative are responsible for advising the student or their representative of the decision and advising them of the options for collecting the Certificate (see section 9).

Related Documents and Information

12. Related Documents

[Academic Transcripts and Certificates Procedure](#)
[Doctoral Regulations](#)
[Doctoral Procedures](#)

[General Programmes of Study Regulations](#)

[Graduation Procedures](#)

[Library Statute](#)

[Master's Thesis Regulations](#)

[Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute](#)

13. Document Management and Control

Approver	Provost as Sponsor of the General Academic Statute
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