



Melbourne College of Divinity

Grievance and Review Procedures

B – Academic Grievances

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B1 Introduction

The purpose of academic grievance procedures is to provide students and staff, with a formal mechanism for the resolution of grievances which may arise over issues of academic progress, from initial application to graduation.

Academic grievances may involve:

- against the denial of enrolment or candidature
- appeal the grading of assessment for coursework
- refusal to continue candidature
- supervision arrangements

- the examination of a thesis
- the overall grading of a degree
- the refusal of the College to make or confer an award, or similar matters

The Regulations governing the awards conferred by the MCD specify the rules followed by the College at each stage, from admission to conferral. These can be found on the [Melbourne College of Divinity website](#).

Policy and procedures relating to non-academic or staff grievances can be found in document C, and harassment in document D.

B2 Grievance regarding selection and enrolment

The sole criteria for selection and admission to MCD courses are the academic qualifications of an applicant, as specified in the relevant MCD Regulation/s.

2.1 Undergraduate courses

Undergraduate courses offered by the MCD are the Associate Diploma, Diploma and Advanced Diploma of Ministry, and the Bachelor of Theology (Pass and Honours degree).

The regulations for selection, enrolment and probationary enrolment are:

- [Bachelor of Theology](#) – Regulation 4
- [Advanced Diploma of Ministry](#) - Regulation 16
- [Diploma of Ministry](#) - Regulation 17

The formal procedure for grievances concerning selection or admission to MCD undergraduate courses is as follows:

2.1.1 Undergraduate applicants

An applicant may appeal against exclusion from an undergraduate course by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar within five (5) working days of notice in writing being served.

The Registrar will consider the grievance in accordance with the relevant MCD Regulation, and deliver a written ruling to the complainant and the relevant RTI Dean within five (5) working days from receipt of the written grievance.

The written ruling of the MCD Registrar in this matter is final, unless it can be shown to be contrary to the Act.

2.1.2 Probationary applicants

An applicant seeking probationary candidature for an undergraduate course may appeal against exclusion from selection by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar within five (5) working days of notice in writing being served. The Registrar will ascertain from the relevant RTI Dean the reason(s) for denying probationary candidature to the complainant, and will speak with the complainant.

The MCD Registrar will make a written ruling and deliver this to the complainant and the relevant RTI Dean within ten (10) working days from receipt of the written grievance.

The written ruling of the MCD Registrar in this matter is final, unless it can be shown to be contrary to the Act.

2.2 Postgraduate courses (coursework)

MCD postgraduate courses conducted by coursework are the Graduate Certificate in Theology (including all specialisations), the Graduate Diplomas in Ministry, Theology and Counselling, the Master of Theological Studies (MTS), the Master of Arts (Coursework) and the Master of Divinity.

Entry to these courses is open to graduates, or persons of equivalent standing. Each RTI Coursework Coordinator, offering postgraduate courses, is responsible for procedures governing the admission of candidates.

The Regulations governing enrolments are:

- [Graduate Diploma in Ministry](#) - Regulation 15
- [Master of Theological Studies](#) - Regulation 19
- [Master of Divinity](#)- Regulation 24

The Regulations for the various Graduate Diplomas and Certificates are:

- [Graduate Certificate in Theology](#) – Regulation 27
- [Graduate Diploma in Theology](#) – Regulation 20
- [Graduate Diploma in Counselling](#) – Regulation 25

The formal procedure for grievances concerning selection or admission to MCD postgraduate coursework degrees follows:

2.2.1 Applicants with a grievance regarding denial of graduate standing

An applicant who claims to be a graduate of a university or of equivalent standing may appeal by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar within five (5) working days of the written decision of the Board being served.

The MCD Registrar will make a written ruling in accordance with the relevant Regulations, and deliver this to the complainant and to the relevant RTI Coursework Coordinator within five (5) working days from receipt of the written grievance.

The decision of the MCD Registrar in this matter is final, unless it can be shown to be contrary to the Act.

2.2.2 Postgraduate coursework applicants denied permission to enrol

An applicant whose graduate standing is accepted, but who is denied permission to enrol in a specialisation of the GradCert, GradDip or MA, or enrol in the

GradDipCounselling, or enrol in the MDiv, may appeal against the decision by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar, within five (5) working days of written notice of the decision of the Academic Board being served.

The MCD Registrar will determine if the admission processes were followed correctly, and forward the decision in writing to the complainant and the RTI Coursework Coordinator concerned within ten (10) working days from receipt of the appeal.

A person whose graduate standing is accepted but whose ministry experience is deemed to be insufficient for admission to the GradDipMin, may appeal against the decision by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar within five (5) working days of written notice of the decision of the Board being served.

The Registrar will make a decision on the appeal and forward it to the complainant and the Director of Research within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written grievance.

When the decision of the Board is supported in this matter, the complainant may request a review of this decision by a Grievance Panel (see A3).

2.3 Postgraduate courses (research)

MCD Higher Degrees by Research are the Master of Ministry, Master of Theology, Master of Arts (Research mode), Doctor of Ministry Studies, Doctor of Theology, and Doctor of Philosophy.

The regulations for admission to these degrees are as follows:

[Master of Ministry](#) - Regulation 6

[Master of Theology](#) – Regulation 7

[Master of Arts \(research mode\)](#) – Regulation 21

[Doctor of Ministry Studies](#) – Regulation 8

[Doctor of Theology](#) – Regulation 9

[Doctor of Philosophy](#)- Regulation 22

Applicants for the DTheol or PhD who are admitted to the MTheol or MA, may then submit an essay after one year of fulltime study (or equivalent). If the essay is deemed to be of sufficient standard, they may be confirmed as a doctoral candidate.

In each case, an applicant who is otherwise qualified may be admitted to a higher degree by research only if the Academic Board can certify that adequate supervision and library facilities are available.

The procedures are as follows:

2.3.1 Applicants with a grievance regarding denial of academic standing

A complainant who claims to hold the required academic qualifications for admission to a research degree may appeal against a negative ruling by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar within five (5) working days of written notice being served.

The MCD Registrar will make a decision in accord with the relevant Regulation, and send it to the complainant and to the MCD Director of Research within five (5) working days of receipt of the written grievance.

The decision of the MCD Registrar in this matter is final, unless it can be shown to be contrary to the Act.

2.3.2 Academically qualified applicants denied permission to enrol

An applicant whose academic standing is accepted, but who has been denied permission to enrol, may appeal against the decision by submitting written evidence to the MCD Registrar within five (5) working days of written notice being served. The MCD Registrar will make a decision on whether the admission process was followed correctly, and send it to the complainant and the Chair of the Board within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written grievance.

If the decision of the Board in this matter is supported, the complainant may request a review of this decision by a Grievance Panel (see A3).

B3 Grievance concerning the grading of coursework

An appeal against grades in coursework may be made in writing to the relevant RTI Coursework Coordinator, within five (5) working days of the result being published in writing.

The RTI Coursework Coordinator must consult with both examiners. (If the Coursework Coordinator was one of these examiners, the appeal must be conducted by the President of the RTI.) If either examiner passes a student, a Pass grade must be awarded.

If the student's work has been passed, and the student appeals against the level of grade awarded, both examiners must agree on whether the grade awarded should be Pass, Credit, Distinction or High Distinction.

The RTI Coursework Coordinator (or President) must make a written decision within five (5) working days from receipt of the written grievance, and forward it to the complainant, the MCD Registrar and the appropriate Chair of Examiners.

An appeal against the grade awarded following the above procedures must be in writing to the appropriate Chair of Examiners within five (5) working days of the decision being served in writing.

The Chair must consider the report of both examiners and that of the RTI Coursework Co-ordinator, may contact the complainant, and will deliver a written decision to the complainant, the relevant RTI Coursework Coordinator and the MCD Registrar within ten (10) working days from receipt of the written grievance.

If the decision of the Board is not accepted, the complainant may request a review of this decision through a Grievance Panel (see A3).

B4 Grievances concerning research students

4.1 Appeal against refusal to continue candidature

A written appeal by an HDR student against the decision of the Board to discontinue her or his candidature will be made to the MCD Registrar, within five (5) working days of the candidate being informed in writing of the decision of the Academic Board. The appeal must be supported in writing by the student's principal Supervisor.

The MCD Registrar must speak with both the complainant and his or her Supervisor, consult with the Chair of the Board, and make a written recommendation to the Academic Board within ten (10) working days of receiving the appeal.

If the decision of the Academic Board is upheld, the applicant may request a review of this decision through a Grievance Panel (see A3).

4.2 Appeal against refusal to upgrade to doctoral candidature

An appeal by a postgraduate research student enrolled in the MA or MTheol, against the refusal of the Academic Board permission to upgrade to doctoral candidature must be made in writing to the MCD Registrar within ten (10) working days of the decision in writing being served. The appeal must be supported in writing by the complainant's principal Supervisor.

The MCD Registrar must speak with the complainant and the Supervisor, consult with the Chair of the Research Committee of the Academic Board, and make a written recommendation to the Academic Board within ten (10) working days of receiving the written grievance.

If the decision of the Academic Board is upheld, the complainant may request a review of this decision through a Grievance Panel (see A3).

When the complainant has successfully completed the MA or MTheol and the degree conferred, the student may apply to the Academic Board for admission to the PhD or DTheol respectively: if this is denied, the procedures in B1.3 apply.

4.3 Higher Degree Research (HDR) student grievance regarding postgraduate supervision arrangements

HDR students may contact the Director of Research if they wish to lodge a grievance regarding supervision. The Director of Research will make a written

report to the Chair of the Academic Board. If the Chair is the student's supervisor or co-supervisor, the report is to be made to the Deputy Chair.

The Director informs the supervisor of the issues raised by the complainant, and seeks to reach resolution. If resolution cannot be reached within one calendar month of submitting the initial complaint, the Academic Board will act on the presumption that resolution will not take place. When supervisors inform the Chair in writing that they cannot continue to supervise the complainant, or complainants inform the Chair in writing that they request a change of supervisor, the Academic Board must appoint a temporary supervisor until the grievance procedures are finalised.

If satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the complainant may request a review of the decision of the Academic Board which will then establish a specific Grievance Panel (see A3).

According to the relevant MCD Regulations, when the Academic Board is unable to appoint an appropriate supervisor, or make suitable arrangements for supervision, then research candidature cannot be continued.

4.4 Supervisor's grievance regarding postgraduate supervision arrangements

Supervisors should contact the Director of Research, when they have a grievance regarding HDR supervision. The Director of Research will make a written report to the Chair of the Research Committee within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written grievance. If the Chair is the supervisor concerned, the report will be made to the Deputy Chair.

The Director will inform the student of the issues raised by the supervisor, and seek to reach resolution. If supervisors inform the Chair in writing that they cannot continue to supervise a student, or students inform the Chair in writing that they request a change of supervisor, the Academic Board must appoint a temporary supervisor until the grievance procedures are finalised.

If resolution cannot be reached to the satisfaction of the complainant, the Academic Board may be requested to establish a specific Grievance Panel (see A3).

4.5 Grievance with the outcome of the examination of a thesis

An appeal against the outcome of the examination of a thesis should be made in writing to the MCD Registrar, within ten (10) working days of the candidate being informed in writing of the result of examination. It must be supported in writing by the student's principal supervisor.

The MA, either major or minor thesis, and MTheol only are awarded with honours. Other

MCD research degrees are awarded without a grade. An appeal may be made against the

failure or the grading of the MA or MTheol, or against the failing of other research degrees.

The MCD Registrar must consult with the appropriate Chair of Examiners, who will have already read the reports of the examiners and made a recommendation to the Board, speak with the complainant and the supervisor, and make a written recommendation to the Academic Board within twenty (20) working days of receiving the appeal.

If the decision of the Academic Board is supported, the complainant may request a review of this decision by a Grievance Panel (see A3).

B5 Grievance regarding refusal of the Council to confer an award

The MCD Registrar is the officer responsible, on the advice of the Chairs of Examiners, for certifying to the Academic Board and the MCD Council the results of all students who are eligible to graduate. The Registrar is also responsible for signing all transcripts. An appeal must therefore presume that substantial checks have already been made on the accuracy of academic results. Therefore an appeal against the refusal of the Council to confer an award can be made only on the grounds of administrative or financial error.

(Grievance procedures regarding non-academic matters are given in document C.)

An appeal against refusal by the Council to confer an award must be in writing to the MCD Dean, within ten (10) working days of the complainant being informed in writing of the decision. The Dean will consult with the MCD Registrar, Director of Research, and if necessary the complainant's principal supervisor or RTI Research Coordinator, to determine if the academic record of the complainant satisfies the requirements of the relevant MCD Regulation, that all fees have been paid, and if any administrative error has been made. The MCD Dean may speak with the complainant.

The MCD Dean will make a report in writing to the MCD President within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written grievance, and the President will inform the complainant in writing of the contents. If error is identified, the President will inform the Council of the Dean's report within five (5) working days, and request that it reconsider its refusal to make the award. Otherwise the original decision stands. The decision of the Council in this matter is final, unless it can be shown to be contrary to the Act.

B6 Grievance Procedures Summary Table

Stage / action	Lodged with	Complaint	Acknowledgement	Response
Academic grievance:				
U/G Enrolment	MCD Registrar	5 working days	5 working days	5 working days
Probationary enrolment	MCD Registrar	5 working days	5 working days	10 working days
P/G graduate standing	MCD Registrar	5 working days	5 working days	5 working days
P/G enrolment	MCD Registrar	5 working days	5 working days	10 working days
Coursework grading	C'work coordinator	5 working days	5 working days	5 working days
Coursework- Appeal	Chair of Examiners	5 working days	5 working days	10 working days
Research Students:				
-refusal to continue	MCD Registrar	5 working days	5 working days	10 working days
-Doctoral upgrade	MCD Registrar	10 working days	5 working days	10 working days
-supervision	Director of Research	N/A	5 working days	One month
-thesis examination	MCD Registrar	10 working days	5 working days	20 working days
Refusal to make award	MCD Dean	10 working days	5 working days	10 working days
Non-academic grievance				
Initial complaint, formal process	Grievance Contact person	10 working days	5 working days	10 working days
FEEHELP - Initial appeal	MCD Executive Assistant	12 months	10 working days	10 working days
- review	MCD Registrar	28 days	5 working days	45 working days
Review of Decision (Grievance Panel)				
Formal complaint	MCD Registrar	10 working days	5 working days	20 working days
External Review	External reviewer	10 working days		30 days

In accord with the Australian Government *National Code 2007* the timetable for international students in relation to grievances may vary to that noted above. Jan09