

# Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology (AJEDP)

Volume 4 2004

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## An investigation of PhD examination outcome in Australia using a mixed method approach

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on doctoral assessment as an area that has been relatively neglected in higher education research. It then describes and justifies a mixed-method approach to the study of PhD examination processes and outcomes in Australia. The design is reported of a study including candidate and candidature information for approximately 800 PhD students across all discipline areas at eight Australian universities, some examiner information, and the 2100 examiner reports on their theses. Examination process, outcome and discourse are discussed in relation to the study design and a number of research questions to be investigated. The sampling method and data collection are described. A particular focus of this paper is how the categories were developed, tested and refined for coding the texts of the examiner reports. The overall aims of the study are to contribute new knowledge about doctoral study and provide a firm empirical foundation for enhancing research performance.

[Link to full text paper pdf \(333KB\)](#)

*Uploaded: 23 November 2004*

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