



GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS

OF THESES SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

These Guidelines detail the procedures for examinations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at The University of Auckland for candidates registered under the 2003 Statute.

They are intended for the guidance of those who have been appointed as examiners, and for others involved with the examination of a PhD at The University of Auckland.

Information regarding the PhD Statute (2003), thesis presentation, PhD procedures, and this document can be accessed online at <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/postgraduate> under the Postgraduate Policy and Guidelines menu item.

In the event of any conflict between the PhD Statute and this guide, the provisions of the Statute will prevail.

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The following extract, from Clause 1 of the Statute for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (2003), details the criteria on which the examination process is to be based;

Clause 1

- c Upon completion of an approved programme of research, the PhD shall be awarded to a candidate who:
 - i submits a thesis, which meets the requirements set out in Clause 1d;
and
 - ii satisfies the examiners in an oral examination, and any other examination that may be required, on the subject of the thesis and on relevant matters in the field or fields to which the subject belongs.
- d The PhD degree is awarded for a formal and systematic exposition of a coherent programme of advanced research work carried out over the period of registration for the Degree which in the opinion of the examiners and the Board of Graduate Studies satisfies all of the following criteria;
 - i to be an original contribution to knowledge or understanding in its field,
and
 - ii to meet internationally recognised standards for such work,
and
 - iii to demonstrate a knowledge of the literature relevant to the subject and the field or fields to which the subject belongs, and the ability to exercise critical and analytical judgment of it,
and
 - iv to be satisfactory in its methodology, in the quality and coherence of its written expression, and in its scholarly presentation and format.





The Board of Graduate Studies appoints two external examiners to examine the candidate's thesis and to provide it with reports and recommendations for its consideration. The relevant provisions of the Statute and Guidelines are as follows.

Examiners should each hold a doctoral degree or have equivalent expertise and experience, and be expert in the field of study which is the subject of the thesis. One examiner (the Oral Examiner) must be able to attend the oral examination and will normally be resident in New Zealand or Australia. At least one examiner should be from outside New Zealand.

The examiners may not be staff members of the University or have been involved in either the thesis research or the preparation of the thesis. However it is not the intention of this provision to exclude the appointment of examiners who have had a minor consultative role on some aspects of the candidate's research.

It is expected that the examiners will prepare and submit their reports independently of each other and that there will be no communication between examiners about the thesis during the reporting process. Neither the supervisors nor the candidate may communicate with the examiners regarding the examination at any stage of the examination process.





Each examiner is to be provided with a copy of the thesis and is asked to provide the Graduate Centre, within two months of receipt of the thesis, with a written report in English on the quality of the thesis according to the criteria outlined above.

Examiners are requested to exercise due care and professional judgement in assessing the extent to which the thesis meets, or fails to meet, these requirements, and to avoid being unduly prejudiced against an argument with whose conclusions they may not necessarily agree.

In the case of a resubmitted thesis, the examination should be of the whole thesis as it is now written. The examination is not to see whether satisfactory revisions have been made, but to decide whether the thesis as a whole now satisfactorily meets the criteria above.

Each report must contain one of the following recommendations;

Clause 9

- h The examiners will include with their reports one of the following recommendations;
 - i to award the degree,
 - or*
 - ii to award the degree after specified minor corrections have been made to the thesis,
 - or*
 - iii to permit the candidate to revise the thesis and resubmit it for examination on one further occasion only,
 - or*
 - iv not to award the degree.

In deciding between recommendations (ii) and (iii) it may be helpful to decide whether the overall quality and quantity of the work is generally adequate for a PhD, and whether the thesis needs to be re-examined after further work or simply checked by the supervisor.

The Board of Graduate Studies relies on the examiners' reports as a means of assessing whether or not the criteria listed in Section 1 have been met. Reports should therefore address these criteria specifically and also summarise the nature of the achievements and/or deficiencies in what the candidate has written. Lists of typographical errors, while welcome, are not expected.

If the recommendation is to resubmit then it is important to give clear reasons for this and also to indicate the issues which should be addressed and/or the nature and extent of any improvements needed to make the thesis acceptable.

If the recommendation is to award the degree, or to award with minor corrections, then it is helpful to suggest questions which might be put at the oral examination. Suggestions for improvements to the research which might assist in future work or publication are also welcome.





The written reports and recommendations should be signed and submitted to the Graduate Centre (at the address given on the first page). A fax is satisfactory in the first instance provided that the original is subsequently received.

The University seeks to complete the examining process for a candidate within six months of the date of submission and so expects examiners to submit their reports within two months of receiving the thesis. To ensure that each thesis receives the careful and thorough examination it deserves, it is also important that examiners are not put under undue pressure to produce reports within a short space of time.

All approaches to an examiner concerning submission of a report must be made through the Graduate Centre. If some unforeseen delay appears likely, the Graduate Centre should be informed.

If a report has not been received within two months, the Graduate Centre will send a reminder to the examiner and advise him or her that unless the report is received within two further months the appointment as examiner will lapse. If the report has not been received within two months of the date of the reminder, the Board of Graduate Studies may appoint a replacement examiner.

Examiners are not required to return theses that were submitted in temporary binding (soft bound) for examination purposes only. All other theses should be returned by mail to the Graduate Centre once all necessary reports have been made.





The Board of Graduate Studies also appoints an Examination Committee with faculty and departmental representatives.

The Graduate Centre sends the reports of examiners to this Examination Committee in the first instance. This Committee also considers any submission made by the supervisor/s prior to examination on the outcome or context of the research.

Examiners' reports are also sent to the supervisor/s on a confidential basis, and they may comment on them in writing to the Examination Committee.

If there is disagreement between examiners, the Examination Committee may seek further clarification from examiners, and may also ask them to consult with each other and report in writing on the outcome.

The Examination Committee then makes a report to the Board of Graduate Studies which includes the nature and outcome of any communications with the examiners and/or supervisor/s which must contain one of the following recommendations;

Clause 9k

i to appoint one or more further independent Examiners to report on any areas of conflict,

or

ii to proceed to the Oral Examination,

or

iii to permit the candidate to revise the thesis and resubmit it for examination on one further occasion only,

or

iv not to award the degree.

The Board of Graduate Studies may appoint further independent external examiners to report on any matters which it may specify.





Prior to the oral examination the candidate should not be informed of the identity of the examiners.

As suppliers of evaluative material in terms of the Privacy Act 1993, the information and reports supplied by examiners will be held in confidence to supervisors and to persons involved in the formal examination process. However the University would prefer to be able to release reports to candidates at the conclusion of the examination process, and therefore requests examiners to consider waiving the confidentiality of reports. No reports will be released unless all examiners have agreed to this.

Should an examiner wish a report to remain confidential, a statement should be included in the report such as 'This report is supplied to the University of Auckland on the condition that the report shall be kept in confidence.' Should an examiner be willing to waive confidentiality of the report a statement should be included in the report such as 'I am willing for the candidate to receive a copy of this report'.

Where resubmission is required, the Examination Committee will be asked to provide the candidate with appropriate information extracted from the reports in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of the examiners.

Under New Zealand law, any person may request a statement of reasons for a decision made about them. This includes decisions of an academic nature. If a candidate requests a statement of reasons for the decision to award or not to award the degree, then the Head of Department will be asked to prepare a brief paper which outlines the points of agreement of the examiners. This paper must preserve any confidentiality of the examination reports and should demonstrate that the decision of the University was based on the recommendations of the examiners as whole, and not on the views of an individual examiner.

In cases of resubmission or where a candidate has requested a statement of reasons for a decision and where all of the examiners have waived the confidentiality of their reports, the University will consider releasing the reports to the candidate in full or in part.





An oral examination must be held at some stage. Once the oral examination is approved by the Board of Graduate Studies, the following procedures apply.

Clause 9m

- i. The Head of Department will arrange this examination.
- ii. The Board of Graduate Studies, on the recommendation of the Head of Department, will appoint a person to act as an independent chair of the oral examination. The chair must be a member of the academic staff of the University, but will not normally be a member of a faculty in which the candidate is registered.
- iii. The examination must be attended by the candidate, the Oral Examiner, the chair and the HoD Nominee on the Examination Committee.
- iv. The Graduate Centre will forward copies of the examiner's reports to the supervisor/s. The main supervisor may attend the oral examination, but will not act as an examiner and may only participate to the extent requested by the chair.
- v. During the oral examination the Oral Examiner and HoD Nominee will discuss with the candidate the subject of the thesis and relevant matters in the field or fields to which the subject belongs. The Oral Examiner will discuss with the candidate issues raised in the examiners' reports and ask questions of the candidate on behalf of the other examiner.

The oral examination is held in private and it is not the practice of the University to have persons present other than those mentioned above.

No part of the examiners' reports, summaries or notes should be given to the candidate in advance of the examination, nor should candidates be given prepared oral questions in advance.

Clause 9n

On completion of the oral examination, the chair will provide a written report and recommendation, endorsed by the HoD Nominee and the Oral Examiner, to the Board of Graduate Studies. The report will include one of the following recommendations; either

- i. to award the degree,
- or*
- ii. to award the degree after specified minor corrections have been made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the Oral Examiner or nominee, who may be the Main Supervisor, and by a specified date,
- or*



iii. to permit the candidate to revise the thesis and resubmit it for examination on one further occasion only,

or

iv not to award the degree.

Unless points raised by the External Examiner have not been satisfactorily answered by the candidate it would not normally be necessary for this examiner to be contacted prior to the completion of the oral report.

In the case of recommendation iii, the report must also state clearly the nature of the revisions recommended.

The candidate should not, in general, be advised at or after the oral examination of the likely outcome until the Board of Graduate Studies has made its decision. However, in the case of recommendation (ii), minor corrections may be undertaken upon the instruction of the Main Supervisor following the conclusion of the oral examination.





Where a revised thesis has been resubmitted for a further examination, either prior to or following an oral examination, the following provisions apply.

Clause 9o

- i. If an oral examination has already been held, a copy of the report of the oral examination will be sent to the Examination Committee.
- ii. The Examination Committee will agree on the date by which the thesis is to be resubmitted and the nature of the revisions recommended, and will convene a meeting with the candidate and supervisors to discuss these revisions. Both the revisions and the date are then to be reported in writing by the Chair of the Examination Committee to the Graduate Centre for approval by the Board of Graduate Studies and formal communication to the candidate. The date of resubmission may not be more than twelve months from the date of the oral examination or, in the case of a recommendation under 9k (iii), not more than twelve months from the date the examiners' reports were forwarded to the Examination Committee by the Graduate Centre.
- iii. The candidate is required to enrol and pay the prescribed tuition and research fees from the month in which the decision was made to the month by which the thesis is to be resubmitted. The registration of the candidate is to continue under the conditions applying at the first date of submission.
- iv. If the thesis is not resubmitted by the prescribed date, the registration of the candidate will normally be terminated.
- v. Upon resubmission, the revised thesis is to be examined as a whole by the same examiners in accordance with the provisions of this Clause, excepting that a further resubmission may not be recommended and that the Examination Committee may recommend that a second oral examination not be held. If one or both of the original examiners is unavailable to re-examine the thesis the Board of Graduate Studies will appoint alternative examiners.





Payment of examiners' fees will be made once all the examiners' reports are received. Air tickets can be made available to oral examiners before the oral examination if requested, or reimbursement of travelling expenses (to scale) in connection with the oral examination will be made on receipt of proof of expenses.

The University of Auckland will pay for the return airfare between the Oral Examiner's residence and Auckland, as well as for any other travel expenses such as taxi fares or car parking costs. For reimbursement to occur, receipts need to be provided. In certain cases, the University will also provide one night's accommodation and meals. This will be arranged by the Graduate Centre. No reimbursements will be made for accommodation or travel expenses incurred without the prior approval of the Graduate Centre.

Examiners will be paid a further fee if they are requested to re-examine a resubmitted thesis.

