Thesis Examination Procedure

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Next review
3.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	18 April 2018	18 April 2018	April 2021

Procedure Statement	
Purpose	This procedure describes the thesis examination processes for all higher degree research (HDR) Programs at UNSW Sydney.
Scope	It applies to all research candidates, supervisors, Postgraduate Research Coordinators (PGCs), Faculty Committees and other positions responsible for management of HDR. The relevant Conditions for Award Policy should be read in conjunction with this procedure.
Are Local Documents on this subject permitted?	☐ Yes, subject to areas specifically restricted within this Procedure. ☒ No
Procedure Processes and Actions	

Archived Document

1. Introduction

Thesis examination is a core assessment required in all higher degree research (HDR) programs. This procedure outlines the processes for preparation, submission and examination of the thesis component of all HDR programs. It also includes the roles and responsibilities of research candidates, supervisors, Postgraduate Research Coordinators (PGC) and the Higher Degree Committee in the examination process.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. The candidate

Research candidates are responsible for:

- The preparation and submission of their thesis for examination. They must ensure that the research described was completed during the period of enrolment for the degree and that it is an account of their own research.
- Ensuring that UNSW's policies and procedures on research integrity are followed (see Related Documents).

2.2. Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for:

- Providing formal advice on progress of the candidate's thesis to the candidate throughout the candidature, and especially prior to submission of the thesis.
- Ensuring that the thesis is in a format suitable for examination and that the candidate has followed all the procedures required for thesis submission (in the case of the Primary Supervisor).
- Providing recommendations to the PGC on the nomination of suitable experts to examine the thesis.

2.3. Postgraduate Research Coordinator (PGC)

The Postgraduate Research Coordinator (PGC) is responsible for:

- Formally nominating suitable examiners of the thesis to the Higher Degree Committee on the basis of the recommendations of the supervisory team.
- Ensuring that the nominated examiners are appropriate and that the examination can be carried out independently and free from perception of bias or preferential treatment.

2.4. Faculty Higher Degree Committee (HDC) or Delegate

The HDC or Delegate (such as the HDC Executive, the Faculty Associate Dean of Research Training (ADRT) or the Director of Postgraduate Research (DPGR) are responsible for:

- Reviewing nomination of examiners, confirming that the examiners are appropriate and free from perceived or actual conflict of interest and appointing the examiners.
- Reviewing the examiners' reports and making a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research about the outcome of the examination.

2.5. Dean of Graduate Research or Delegate

The Dean of Graduate Research is responsible for

- The implementation of the procedures
- Determining whether a research higher degree student has satisfied requirements for the award of a degree.

3. Format of the Thesis

The thesis must be a coherent, scholarly body of work and must meet the specified format and standards.

3.1. Minimum requirements

(a) An independent introduction that contextualises the research in relation to the current knowledge in the field.

(b) Thesis chapters in a logical and cogent sequence presenting an argument that supports the main findings of the thesis.

(c) A conclusion that summarises the findings and articulates clearly the new contribution to knowledge in the discipline.

(d) A candidate may submit work as part of the thesis that has been published or accepted for publication or manuscripts submitted for publication that contribute directly to their argument and support their findings (see Section 5.2). A thesis with publications incorporated must meet the above minimum requirements.

(e) In addition, there are alternative formats for the HDR thesis that may be suitable for some disciplines and/or for some candidates, such as the incorporation of portfolios of creative works and/or exhibitions of practice-based research. Faculties Higher Degree Committees will provide guidance on discipline specific requirements.

4. Examination Criteria

Examiners are expected to submit to the University a recommendation (as detailed in the Conditions of Award) regarding the thesis and to provide a written report on the thesis that provides a strong justification for their recommendation. Where indicated, the examiner must provide guidance to the candidate regarding any changes required.

The examiners are asked to examine the thesis against the following criteria:

- Does the candidate demonstrate a significant and original contribution to knowledge (relative to the level of the degree being sought)?
- Does the candidate engage with the literature and the work of others?
- Does the candidate show an advanced knowledge of research principles and methods related to the applicable discipline?
- Is there a clear and discernible lucidity in the presented research, its arguments and conclusions?
- Is the thesis clearly, accurately and logically written?

Archived Document

5. Thesis Preparation and Submission

The Graduate Research School (GRS) website provides candidates with guidelines and checklists for the format, number of copies and length of the thesis appropriate for the degree. All required documents must be included in all submitted copies of the candidate's thesis, and all required approvals must be provided before the candidate's thesis will be sent for examination.

5.1. Format and Number of Copies

(a) Formatting requirements are set out in the GRS Thesis Format Guide (GRS Guidelines) on the GRS website. Candidates should also consult their supervisors or other advisors within their enrolling unit on any disciplinary formatting requirements appropriate to the degree for which the thesis is being prepared.

(b) Alternative formats for the HDR thesis may be used in some disciplines and/or for some candidates, such as the incorporation of portfolios of creative works and/or exhibitions of practice-based research.

(c) At the completion of the examination and prior to graduation, every candidate who has satisfied requirements for the award of the degree will submit two digital copies (master and public) for deposit and preservation in the University Library. Candidates can opt to have their thesis placed under embargo for 2 years or less, in which case the thesis will be released by the library after this period has elapsed (see Section 5.3). See the Library Website and the GRS website for full details.

(d) An abstract should be included before the Table of Contents indicating the problem investigated, the procedures followed, the general results obtained and the major conclusions reached. The abstract shall not contain any illustrations. Candidates shall provide the abstract to the GRS by the method advised on the GRS website so that it can be appended as part of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement.

(e) All copies must include the *Originality Statement* and the *Copyright Statement* as shown in Appendix A and the GRS Guidelines. The *Authenticity Statement* must be included in the final officially approved version of the thesis.

(f) If the candidate wishes to include published work, an *Inclusions of Publications Statement* must be provided as shown in Appendix A and the GRS Guidelines (see Section 5.2).

5.2. Incorporation of Publications into the Thesis

UNSW is supportive of candidates publishing their research results during their candidature. If candidates include such publications in the thesis, they must provide full details of these publications through use of the Inclusion of Publications Statement (see Appendix A). The statement must be completed and signed off by both the primary supervisor and the PGC. Faculties may have discipline-specific guidelines that should be consulted.

If publications or manuscripts are included in the thesis, the following points must be followed:

- Published work may only be included in the thesis if the research and its publication occurred during candidature for the degree.
- It is expected that the candidate is the primary author of the publications or manuscripts included in the thesis.
- Where the candidate is not the sole primary author of a publication, the contributions of others to the research and the writing of the publication must be acknowledged. Where the papers have multiple authors, permission to include the publication/s in the thesis must be sought from the co-authors.
- In cases where other co-authors are also higher degree candidates and who may also want to include the work in their thesis, the HDC must establish whether it is appropriate for the work to be incorporated as a publication or whether it should be presented in a conventional thesis format, with clear acknowledgement of contributions.
- It is expected that published work included in the thesis has been published in high-quality peer-reviewed journals or other locations that are discipline appropriate.
- If required, the thesis should have appropriate linking text in the form of short chapters inserted between published works to support coherence of the thesis.
- The candidate must obtain permission to reproduce copyright material where the right to reproduce has not already been granted as part of the publication process by the copyright

Archived Document

holder. If copyright on third-party material has been assigned to a publisher, permission must be sought, in advance of submission, to reproduce the work in the thesis.

5.3. Pre-Submission Procedures

The candidate must complete the notification of intention to submit (NOITS) form at least 2 months prior to the expected thesis submission date via the method outlined on the GRS website. This is required to allow adequate time for the examiners of the thesis to be nominated and approved. While it is hoped that the expected date of submission will be correct, it is appreciated that this is not always the case. In such cases, candidates can update the date by contacting the Thesis Examination team of the Graduate Research School, but do not need to re-submit the NOITS.

There are three scenarios which require approval before submission of the thesis:

5.3.1 Restricted Access of the Thesis

It is a principle of the University that a thesis produced under a higher degree research program should be publicly available. However, in some circumstances immediate public access to the thesis may not be desirable. An embargo of 2 years or less is available and candidates can opt-in when they deposit the final digital copies of the thesis to the Library. UNSW Library staff will be informed of approved restrictions and will apply these for the agreed period.

If the candidate believes that the embargo will need to be for more than two years, they will need to request permission at least 6 months before submitting the thesis for examination. The Restricted Access form is available on the GRS website. These requests must provide strong evidence for why an extended embargo is required.

5.3.2 Confidentiality of Examination

While all examinations are expected to be carried out confidentially, there are situations when either the candidate or a third party requires a certain level of legal protection. For example, the thesis may contain material that is commercial-in-confidence, or it may give rise to a patent, or may be legally or culturally sensitive.

The candidate can request a confidential examination through the primary supervisor. If the primary supervisor agrees that a confidential examination is needed, they must declare this on the UNSW Nomination of Examiners (NOE) form. The GRS will contact the candidate and primary supervisor regarding their request, at which time a Confidential Thesis Examination Request form must be completed by the candidate and primary supervisor. The completed form must then be submitted to the GRS, along with any supporting documentation, for review by the Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate.

If a confidential examination request is approved, the GRS will advise each examiner that a confidential examination has been requested and will ask them to sign a non-disclosure agreement. By signing this agreement, examiners confirm that they will not disclose any of the thesis content and will return, destroy or delete all copies of materials relating to the thesis, including the thesis itself.

The approval of a request for a confidential thesis examination does not confer any automatic or legal right to embargo public access to the final version of the thesis after the examination is complete. This must be requested as described in Section 5.3.1.

5.3.3 Thesis Submission in Less Than the Minimum Number of Semesters

In exceptional circumstances, a candidate who demonstrates outstanding research skills may request submission of the thesis in less than three years (full-time) for a PhD or one and a half years (full-time) for a Master by Research or Master of Philosophy degree. Prior to approval of early submission the candidate must submit a request to the Faculty HDC which provides:

- Evidence of outstanding research including publication of a substantial body of work in leading international journals in their field; and
- Supporting documentation from the primary supervisor and the PGC confirming that the candidate will not be disadvantaged by submitting early; and
- Confirmation via the Annual Research Progress Review process that a high level of achievement throughout the candidature has been achieved.

5.4. Plagiarism

UNSW requires researchers to produce work that is robust and accurate and conducted in accordance with the UNSW *Research Code of Conduct*. It is expected that the supervisors will use iThenticate as a tool to support the writing process throughout the candidature. In addition, the primary supervisor must

Archived Document

use iThenticate to confirm that the final work is free of plagiarism and suitable for examination. This will be documented on the supervisor's certificate before submission of the thesis.

5.5. Supervisor's Certificate

Before the thesis can be sent for examination, the primary supervisor must complete the supervisor's certificate. Completion of the supervisor's certificate is not an endorsement that the thesis will pass examination. The supervisor's certificate must confirm that:

- the thesis is in a format suitable for examination; and
- the thesis abstract conforms to UNSW requirements and accurately represents the thesis; and
- the supervisor is satisfied with the quality of the writing and that the thesis is free of any plagiarised material with the final version of the thesis having been reviewed using iThenticate to check for similarity and plagiarism; and
- the required declarations and signatures have been obtained by the candidate, and included in the final version of the thesis for submission where there are either sole author or co-authored publications that make up part of the thesis.

If the primary supervisor believes that they cannot sign the supervisor's certificate, they must advise both the candidate and PGC in writing of their reasons for not approving the candidate's thesis submission. This must be done prior to, or up to 2 weeks following the thesis being submitted.

- If the candidate still wishes to submit their thesis against the recommendation of their supervisor, the PGC will request written submissions from both the candidate and the primary supervisor for review at the next available Faculty HDC meeting.
- The PGC provides a recommendation to the Faculty HDC on whether the thesis should be submitted for examination, and if not, what remedial action needs to be taken.
- If the HDC determines that the thesis be examined against the recommendation of the primary supervisor, they become responsible for the nomination of examiners and the examination process.
- If the HDC determines that the thesis should not be submitted, then the candidate is notified of this decision. The chair of the HDC will liaise with the Head of School (HoS) to arrange a meeting with the candidate, PGC and the primary supervisor to determine on how to proceed.

6. Nomination of Examiners

As a general principle, the identity of approved examiners must not be disclosed to the candidate at any stage of the examination process, including the nomination process. Identities will not be revealed until the conclusion of the thesis examination process (see Sections 7 and 8). The candidate will be informed of this procedure at the time they lodge their intention to submit.

6.1. Selection

(a) In advance of the planned submission date, the HDC shall appoint 2 examiners according to the Conditions for Award of the degree. The HDC may seek advice from the PGC, primary supervisor, co-supervisor, HoS or other member of academic staff.

(b) If the primary supervisor has failed to provide suitable recommendations within 4 weeks of the candidate submitting their thesis for examination, the PGC may need to take responsibility for the nomination of examiners to ensure a timely examination process.

(c) The nominated examiners must:

- Be experts of international standing in the discipline who are external to the enrolling institution, independent of the conduct of the research, academically reputable in the field of the thesis, with a significant body of published work, or other publicly recognised output as appropriate for their discipline;
- Be free from any real or perceived conflict of interest (COI), as per the UNSW *Conflict of Interest Policy* and the UNSW Higher Degree Examiner Conflict of Interest Guide. All real or perceived COI must be declared and explained on the UNSW Nomination of Examiners form (see Section 6.3);
- Typically hold a qualification at least equivalent to the level of the award being examined;
- Have previous experience in HDR supervision and/or HDR examination; and

Archived Document

- Be willing to serve as the examiner on the Oral Examination Panel if an oral examination has been requested (see Appendix B for more information).

(d) For the examination of a PhD thesis, it is preferred that at least one of the nominated examiners be from outside Australia.

(e) Prior to the appointment of examiners, the HDC shall ascertain in writing whether the candidate has any concerns regarding the suitability of any person as a potential examiner. The candidate should also identify any person whose appointment as an examiner may result in a conflict of interest during the examination (e.g. any potential employers). For this purpose, the HDC requires the primary supervisor to ask the candidate to either provide the names of any persons that should not be examiners, or to identify any names on a panel of potential examiners about whose potential role the candidate may have concern.

- Any concern raised by the candidate shall be placed on record with the HDC at the time of the appointment of examiners.
- Where possible, the persons identified by the candidate should not be used as examiners. However, the HDC may appoint examiners even where the candidate has expressed concern. When such an appointment occurs, the record of the candidate's concern shall be brought to the attention of the HDC again at the time the examiners' reports are considered.

6.2. Contact with Examiners During the Nomination Process

The information provided to examiners on initial contact by the primary supervisor (or other person/s responsible for nomination) and prior to approval of examiners by the HDC should include:

- The topic or title of the thesis
- The degree for which the candidate is submitting the thesis
- The planned submission date
- The length of time available for the examination of the thesis
- Reference to relevant UNSW procedures for examination.

After an examiner has accepted and the HDC has approved their nomination, the examiner will be notified by the GRS of any changes to the planned submission date. If an examiner is no longer available to examine the thesis after the amended date, the GRS must be informed so an alternate examiner can be nominated.

6.3. Conflict of Interest (COI)

The thesis must be examined independently and free from actual or perceived bias. Therefore, the primary supervisor should consult other members of the supervisory team about their views on potential examiners, and avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest (COI) with the potential examiners prior to their nomination.

Any real or perceived COI, as defined in the UNSW *Conflict of Interest Policy* and the UNSW Higher Degree Examiner Conflict of Interest Guide, must be declared by the primary supervisor, and any other members of the candidate's supervisory team, on the Nomination of Examiners form. The above UNSW documents are informed by those of the Australian Council of Graduate Research.

The existence of a COI does not automatically prevent the approval of a nominated examiner. Information provided about the nature of the conflict is assessed by the PGC, Faculty HDC or Delegate, and the Dean of Graduate Research or delegate in the decision-making process.

If a COI arises during the examination, one or both examiners' reports may be annulled, in which case (a) replacement examiner(s) will be appointed as described in the process outlined in Section 6.1.

6.4. Nomination of Examiners (NOE) Form

To appoint the examiners, the UNSW Nomination of Examiners form must be completed and submitted by the primary supervisor. Along with the examiner's contact details, a robust justification of the suitability of the examiner must be provided, along with the declaration of any COI issues (see Section 6.3). The completed UNSW NOE form should be submitted to the PGC ideally 2 weeks before the submission of the candidate's thesis.

The PGC is responsible for reviewing the submitted NOE. If they have additional questions about the justifications for an examiner's nomination, or any declared or undeclared COI, they will discuss this with the primary supervisor. Once satisfied with the NOE form, the PGC is required to formally advise the GRS of their approval.

Archived Document

The Faculty, either by ADRT (or Faculty equivalent) or the HDC, will review any declaration of possible COIs and approve the nominated examiners. In cases where a COI is declared and the ADRT approves the examiners, the Dean of Graduate Research or delegate will review the form to ensure UNSW's policies and procedures are being followed. Once approved, the NOE form is returned to the GRS for processing.

6.5. Disclosure of Examiner Identity and Candidate Contact

(a) When the University extends an invitation to examine a thesis, it expects the examiner to provide a fair, independent and expert report to the HDC. This does not imply any further obligation on the part of the examiner directly to the candidate.

(b) As a general principle, examiner identity must remain confidential until the examination process has reached a stage where the information may be released, in accordance with Section 8.1 to 8.4 of this Procedure.

(c) The identity of examiners will not be disclosed to the candidate if anonymity is requested in the examination report or if the HDC or the Dean of Graduate Research determines that it would be in the interests of the University to withhold the name, subject to any external legal obligations.

(d) If a candidate infers the identity of examiner/s, they must not contact the examiner/s concerning the thesis after submission of the thesis for examination and prior to report. Violation of this requirement may be construed as an attempt to influence the examination and may give rise to a charge of academic misconduct.

(e) Examiners must not contact candidates or any members of the supervisory team directly during the examination process. If they require information, they should contact the GRS. If contact is made by an examiner, the candidate and supervisor/s should inform the GRS immediately.

(f) At any other time, the candidate must seek permission from the primary supervisor or PGC before contacting the examiner/s. Any permission granted shall be in writing and require the prior agreement of the examiner concerned.

(g) This procedure will be disclosed to examiners at the time the thesis is sent.

7. Examination Processes and Timelines

7.1. Information Provided to Examiners

The following information will be provided to the examiners by the GRS at the time the thesis is sent:

- A letter outlining the contents of the thesis package and contact details of the other examiner, who they may contact if they wish to discuss any aspect of the thesis;
- Information for examiners of theses, including honorarium amounts;
- A thesis receipt acknowledgement and payment details form;
- An examiner's report form;
- Notes for examiners for the relevant degree; and
- The conditions for award of the relevant degree.

7.2. Timelines

(a) A candidate's thesis will typically be sent to examiners no later than one week after submission, provided that examiners have been approved, and all other requirements have been met.

(b) Examiners are asked to acknowledge receipt of the thesis and provide details for payment of the honorarium upon delivery of the thesis. The GRS will send a reminder to any examiners who are yet to confirm receipt of the thesis after 2 weeks.

(c) Examiners are expected to provide a report by a specified date, typically 6 weeks from the date of thesis dispatch. The GRS will send a reminder to examiners regarding the due date of their report 2 weeks prior to the due date.

(d) If any reports are not submitted to the GRS by the due date, the GRS will provide details of the overdue report(s) to the PGC, who will then contact the examiners regarding their overdue report.

(e) If a reasonable revised report due date cannot be negotiated with the examiner, the primary supervisor will be advised, and a new examiner will need to be nominated as per Section 6.

Archived Document

(f) Once a thesis has been sent to a replacement examiner, any report subsequently received from the examiner who was replaced shall not be considered in determining the result of the examination.

8. Examination Outcomes and Appeal

When both examiners' reports have been received, they will be reviewed and a recommendation provided on the next steps in the process within 1 week of receipt. Reports will be sent to the PGC unless they are also the supervisor, in which case reports will be sent to the Head of School or their delegate. It is expected that candidates will address any issues raised by the examiners and make corrections as required. The candidate will submit a response to examiner comments using the template provided by the GRS. The award of the degree cannot occur until appropriate corrections have been made and the Dean of Graduate Research or delegate has approved the recommendation to award the degree.

8.1. Award or Minor Corrections

If the reports recommend Award or a combination of Award and Minor Corrections, they will be sent to the PGC for a recommendation on the level of corrections required. The GRS will convey the PGC's recommendation to the candidate and primary supervisor, along with both examiner reports. Unless specifically requested by an examiner, the reports will not be de-identified.

- The GRS will also advise the candidate and primary supervisor of the expected due date for the candidate to submit their responses to examiner comments to their primary supervisor, which is typically 2 weeks from the date of notification in the case of a PGC recommendation of minor corrections.
- Following the submission of responses and the revised thesis by the candidate, the primary supervisor must advise the PGC whether they are satisfied with the changes. The PGC will review the candidate's responses and revised thesis and when the PGC believes that the candidate has satisfactorily addressed the examiner comments, they will advise the GRS that the recommendation is to award the degree.
- The Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate will implement the recommendation.
- If the thesis has been assessed as Award by both examiners, the degree can be awarded. However, even in such cases if the examiner(s) do suggest corrections, it is expected that the candidate will either incorporate the corrections into the final version of the thesis or provide a justification for why they are not appropriate.

8.2. Further Work

If the reports contain one or more recommendations of Further Work, but no Revise/Re-examine or Non-Award grades, then the identity of the examiners will be blinded and sent to the PGC for a recommendation on the level of corrections required. The GRS will convey the PGC's recommendation to the candidate and primary supervisor, along with de-identified examiner reports. The GRS will also advise of the expected due date for the candidate to submit their responses to examiner comments to their primary supervisor which is typically 6 weeks from the date of notification.

- Following the submission of responses and the revised thesis by the candidate, the primary supervisor must advise the PGC whether they are satisfied with the changes. The PGC will conduct a review of the candidate's responses and revised thesis and when they are satisfied that the examiners' comments have been addressed, they submit their recommendation to the HDC for review.
- The candidate's response to the PGC recommendations of further work will be considered by the HDC who can engage an independent reviewer if they so choose. Should the HDC require additional work by the candidate, the GRS will advise the candidate and primary supervisor what is required.
- Once the HDC is satisfied that the candidate has satisfactorily addressed the comments of the examiners, they will advise the GRS that the recommendation is to award the degree.
- The Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate will implement the recommendation.

8.3. Revise and Re-examine

If both examiners recommend Revise and Re-examine, the Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate will review the reports and provide advice to the Faculty HDC. The de-identified reports will then be sent to the PGC for review and discussion with the primary supervisor and the candidate, after

Archived Document

which time the PGC will provide a recommendation to the HDC. The Faculty HDC will assess both reports, and make a recommendation on the amount of time that the candidate will be given to address the concerns raised in each report. It is expected that the candidate will have to re-enrol for at least one semester to carry out the required work and revisions. The HDC can recommend a longer period of enrolment if it is felt that the revisions require further time. Candidates should undergo progress reviews as per 6.3 of the *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure*.

- The GRS will advise the candidate, primary supervisor and GPC of the recommendation from the HDC and the timeframe for revisions afforded to the candidate. The GRS will also provide the candidate with the responses to examiner comments template and de-identified copies of both examiner reports.
- The thesis will be submitted for re-examination and where possible, the re-examination should be carried out by the original examiner(s). If this is not possible, the procedure described in Section 8.6 will be followed.
- In the case where a thesis is being re-examined, a recommendation of revise and re-submit is not permitted.
- Once the examination report(s) on the revised thesis has been received by the GRS, the examination process will continue as per 8.1, 8.2 or 8.4, depending on the examiner's recommendation.

8.4. Non-Award

When both examiners recommend Non-Award or an examiner recommends Non-Award for a revised and resubmitted thesis, the Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate will review the report(s) and provide advice to the HDC. The de-identified report(s) will then be sent to the PGC for review and discussion with the primary supervisor and the candidate, after which time the PGC will provide a recommendation to the HDC. The HDC will discuss the report(s) and either recommend that the degree is not awarded, or in the case of a Non-Award recommendation for a PhD, the Committee may consider whether the candidate has satisfied the conditions for the award of a Masters by Research degree. The HDC may use an independent assessor to assist their deliberations (see Section 8.6).

The HDC's recommendation will be considered by the Dean of Graduate Research or delegate, after which the formal examination outcome will be relayed to the candidate, primary supervisor and PGC. The GRS will also provide the candidate with de-identified copies of both examiner reports. The candidate must be given written notification of the reasons for this recommendation and must be provided with the opportunity to make a written submission to the Committee.

8.5. Divergent Reports

In some examinations, the examiners will provide divergent reports where one examiner will recommend that the thesis has met the requirements (although it may require minor corrections or further work) and the other will recommend that the thesis is not at the standard for the award of the degree or requires revision and re-examination. It is important to note that both reports have equal weighting and as such, a report cannot be discarded or discounted when deciding the next steps. Thus, a revision or non-award recommendation from an examiner will need to be addressed as part of the process.

As such cases are complex in nature, the outcome is determined on a case-by-case basis. The Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate will review both reports to confirm they are correct procedurally and provide advice. The de-identified reports will then be sent to the PGC for review and discussion with the primary supervisor and the candidate, after which time the PGC will provide a recommendation to the HDC.

The HDC can engage an independent assessor for advice on the reports as detailed in Section 8.6 or they may also consider that the use of an oral examination may be required as part of the process to determine the outcome. Once decided, the HDC's recommendation will be considered by the Dean of Graduate Research or delegate, after which the formal examination outcome along with de-identified copies of both examiner reports will be relayed to the candidate, primary supervisor and PGC.

8.6. Engagement of an Independent Assessor

In cases where independent advice on the examination is required, an assessor who is independent of the examination process may be appointed to aid the committee in its deliberations. The independent assessor must be nominated by the PGC, following the examiner nomination procedures in Section 6, using the appropriate form as advised by the GRS.

The independent assessor can be tasked with:

Archived Document

- reviewing the examination process and providing advice to the HDC on whether the examination has been carried out in an appropriate manner, and/or
- providing a recommendation on whether the candidate could be permitted to revise their thesis to the appropriate standard or whether the award of a Masters by Research degree is possible.

The independent assessor would submit their recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate.

8.7. Non-availability of Examiners

In cases where re-examination is required, if one or more of the original examiners decline to re-examine the thesis the HDC should seek further advice on the revised thesis from an assessor who is independent of the preceding examination process (as described in Section 8.6). The assessor should consider all the material provided, weighing up the reports from the examiners. It should be noted that they are not being asked to examine the thesis, but to consider all the material above and make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate on the examination outcome.

8.8. Flowchart

A flowchart outlining the process that the HDC follows to manage thesis examiners recommendations is given in Appendix C.

8.9. Appeal of the Decision

Where the examination process results in a "Non-Award" outcome, the candidate has the right to appeal to the UNSW Student Integrity Unit. This appeal may only be lodged on grounds of procedural fairness.

Archived Document

Accountabilities	
Responsible Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training) & Dean of Graduate Research
Contact Officer	Director, Graduate Research School
Supporting Information	
Legislative Compliance	This procedure supports the University's compliance with the following legislation: Higher Education Standards Framework https://www.teqsa.gov.au/higher-education-standards-framework-2015
Parent Document (Policy)	Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Policy Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy
Supporting Documents	Nil
Related Documents	Admissions Policy Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure Student Complaint Procedure Roles and Responsibilities of Postgraduate Research Coordinators Guideline Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure Variation of Candidature Procedure Research Code of Conduct Copyright Ownership Guidelines Intellectual Property Policy Open Access and UNSWorks Guidelines Plagiarism Policy Research - Authorship and Resolving Disputes Between Authors Procedure Research - Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct Procedure Research - Handling Research Material & Data Procedure UNSWorks Digital Preservation Policy UNSWorks Digital Preservation Procedure
Superseded Documents	Thesis Examination Procedure (version 2.2)
File Number	2012/01615

Definitions and Acronyms

No terms have been defined.

Revision History

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Academic Board (AB04/131)	5 October 2004	5 October 2004	
2.0	Academic Board (AB08/09)	5 February 2008	5 February 2008	Full review and new attachment (pg.4).
1.0	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)	27 March 2012	1 April 2012	Revision, reformat using GS templates and addition of nomination of examiners information

Archived Document

2.0	Vice-President and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)	18 December 2012	18 December 2012	Addition of thesis embargo procedure at 2.2.1 (d) and minor edits
2.1	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)	29 April 2014	29 April 2014	
2.2	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)	15 October 2015	15 October 2015	Addition of Electronic copy of thesis at 2.2.1 (c) and minor edits.
3.0	Deputy Vice Chancellor Research	18 April 2018	18 April 2018	Full review including changes / additions regarding incorporation of publications in theses, plagiarism, and the handling of divergent reports.

Note: in 2012 the *Preparation and Submission of Master by Research and Doctoral Theses for Examination* (AB08/09) was integrated with the Policy on Examination of Research Degrees (UNSW Handbook myUNSW) to create the *Thesis Examination Procedures.*

Archived Document

Appendix A – Statements that must be included in the thesis

The GRS Thesis Format Guide should be consulted when preparing the thesis. As indicated in 5.1 of this Procedure, there are several key statements that must be included in the thesis before submission.

1. Thesis/Dissertation Sheet

All thesis copies shall contain in the preliminary pages, preceding the Table of Contents, a signed and witnessed Thesis/Dissertation Sheet containing an abstract of not more than 350 words which shall indicate the problem investigated, the procedures followed, the general results obtained and the major conclusions reached, but shall not contain any illustrations.

2. Originality Statement

All thesis copies shall contain an Originality Statement. The statement must appear on a separate page in the preliminary pages of the thesis, preceding the Table of Contents. The following wording will be used: Originality Statement 'I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UNSW or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at UNSW or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.'

3. Copyright and Authenticity Statements

The statements must appear on a separate page in the preliminary pages of the thesis, preceding the Table of Contents.

Copyright Statement

'I hereby grant the University of New South Wales or its agents the right to archive and to make available my thesis or dissertation in whole or part in the University libraries in all forms of media, now or here after known, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I retain all proprietary rights, such as patent rights. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation. I also authorise University Microfilms to use the 350 word abstract of my thesis in Dissertation Abstract International (this is applicable to doctoral theses only). I have either used no substantial portions of copyright material in my thesis or I have obtained permission to use copyright material; where permission has not been granted I have applied/will apply for a partial restriction of the digital copy of my thesis or dissertation.'

Authenticity Statement

'I certify that the Library deposit digital copy is a direct equivalent of the final officially approved version of my thesis. No emendation of content has occurred and if there are any minor variations in formatting, they are the result of the conversion to digital format.'

4. Inclusion of Publications Statement

As detailed in Section 5, if the candidate wishes to include any published work or work prepared for future publication they must provide an Inclusion of Publications statement.

The statement must include:

- The details of the work,
- The location of the work in the thesis and/or how it is incorporated in the thesis
- The candidate's contribution to the work
- Details of co-author permission/s obtained for work by multiple authors. Each author must sign to give permission for the paper to be included in the thesis. If co-author signatures cannot be obtained, the primary supervisor must sign a statement on behalf of the co-authors.

A template for this statement will be provided on the Graduate Research website.

Archived Document

Appendix B – Oral Examination

1. Introduction

UNSW recognises that some disciplines consider an oral thesis examination (viva voce) to be an integral part of the HDR journey. Oral examinations are also required for some PhDs conducted in international mode (e.g. joint PhDs, Cotutelle) where the partner university has a requirement for an oral examination. It is also recognised that an oral examination can be used to help determine the outcome in examinations where there are divergent reports (see Section 8.5).

An oral examination does not replace a written thesis examination, nor can one proceed unless both examiners' reports have been received by the GRS.

Objectives of the oral thesis examination are as follows:

- To validate the thesis work as having been conducted by the candidate
- To allow the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate they can defend their thesis in relation to specific issues raised by the examiners
- To give an opportunity for critical feedback to the candidate
- To allow academic debate of the thesis and the feedback provided by the examiners.

2. Process

2.1 Panel Composition

(a) At the time of completing the NOE form, the primary supervisor should indicate whether an oral examination is to be part of the examination process, and, if so, which nominated examiner will be part of the oral examination panel.

The oral examination panel must comprise an independent Chair, an oral examiner and the HoS nominee of the Examination Committee. When reviewing the NOE, the PGC will nominate the independent Panel Chair and a HoS Nominee to attend the oral examination. The nominated Panel Chair must be a senior academic with experience in HDR supervision. The School Nominee will provide disciplinary and department-specific representation during the oral examination, and must be independent of both the supervisory team and the candidate. The primary supervisor may attend in the capacity of observer, but cannot take part in the examination.

(b) In the case of an oral examination being used where a candidate has received divergent reports, it is expected that the PGC, in consultation with the GRS, will liaise with the examiners to determine the composition of the examination panel.

2.2 Oral Examination

In addition to the written report, examiners will be asked to provide one of three possible recommendations:

- The thesis is satisfactory and the candidate should proceed to oral examination.
- The thesis requires some modification but the candidate can proceed to oral examination.
- The thesis is not at the standard expected for the award of the degree and the candidate should revise and resubmit.

In cases where an oral examination has been approved, once both written examiner reports have been received by the GRS, the reports will be forwarded to the PGC for their recommendation. Once the PGC's recommendation has been received, the GRS will notify the candidate, supervisors, and the members of the panel on when the oral examination will take place.

The oral examination should not be scheduled for less than two weeks after the examiner reports have been released to the candidate and panel.

Upon receipt of the reports, the candidate must prepare for the examination by thoroughly re-familiarising themselves with their thesis, and reflect on the issues raised in the examiners' reports. As the candidate will be required to give a presentation to the panel, the candidate should also:

- identify the core component of the thesis, its methodology, and its outcome; and
- establish the originality of their work in relation to previous scholarship in the area.

Prior to the oral examination, the Panel Chair will liaise with the HoS Nominee and the Oral Examiner to discuss the examiners' reports and process for the oral examination, including the roles of the panel members, the allocation of questions, and the options as to the outcome.

Archived Document

At the beginning of the oral examination, the Panel Chair is to introduce the panel members and explain their roles. The Chair will also explain to the candidate the order in which the examiner will initially ask questions, although it is expected that once discussion is underway, this will flow naturally and in no particular order. The oral examination will normally last between one to two hours, and the Chair must ensure that breaks are taken if the examination exceeds two hours in duration.

When the Oral Examiner and the HoS Nominee are satisfied that the issues in the written reports, as well as any other concerns and interests have been adequately covered, they are to advise the Chair of their readiness to bring proceedings to an end.

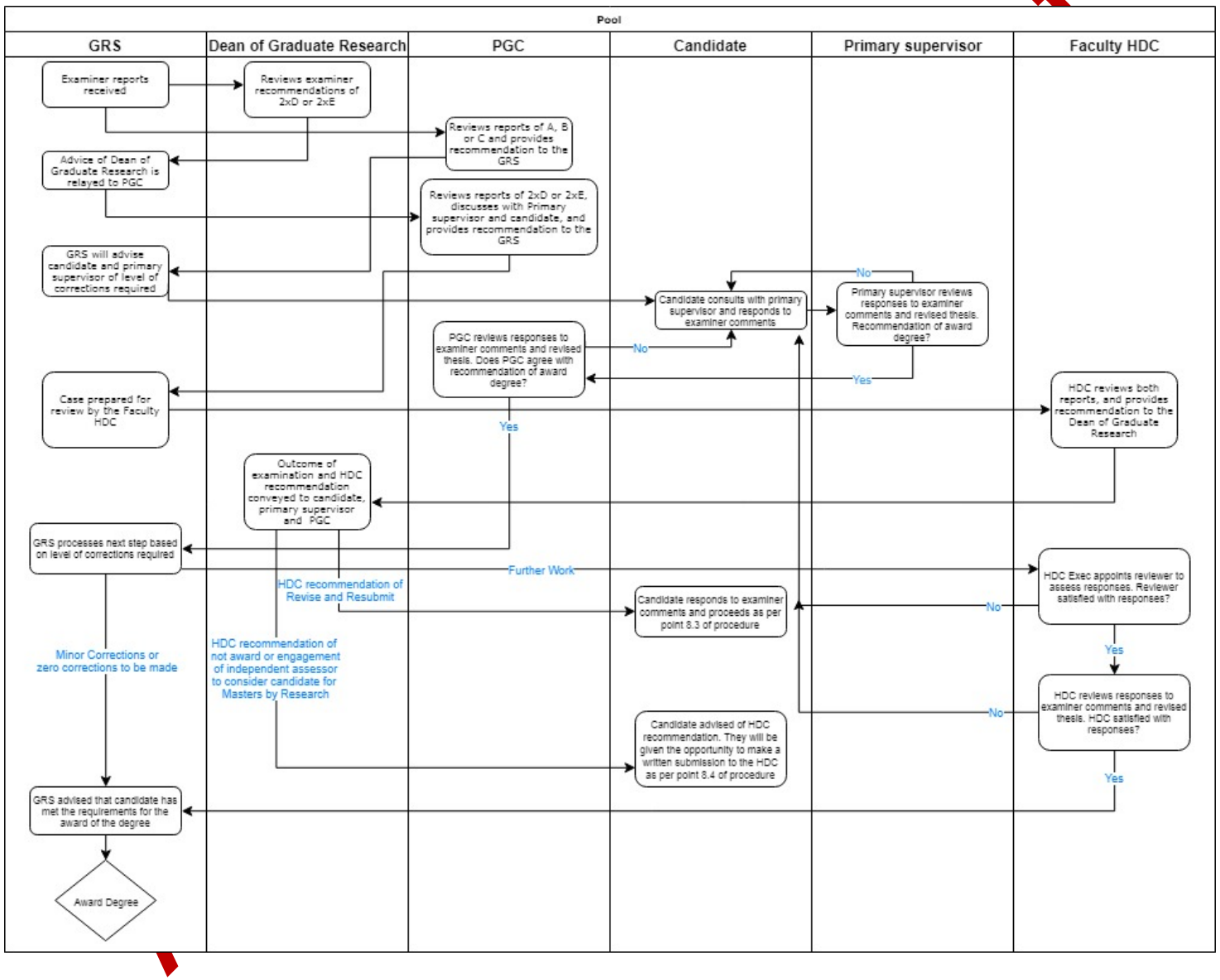
Once the oral examination has ended, the Chair will ask the candidate to leave the room, after which time the panel will discuss the examination. The candidate will be invited back into the room and advised of the panel's preliminary recommendation.

If the recommendation requires that the candidate make minor corrections, revise part or parts of the thesis, or revise and resubmit, the Chair is to either:

- advise the candidate and the supervisor about the nature of these corrections and/or revisions or
- explain how the candidate will be advised about these corrections and/or revisions at a later date

The Chair will draft a report and recommendation, which will be endorsed by the HoS nominee and oral examiner, on the same day if possible, and sent to the GRS.

Once the GRS have received the Panel's official recommendation from the oral examination, this recommendation and report will be passed onto the candidate and their primary supervisor, along with advice on the expected due date of their revisions, as per Appendix C.

Archived Document

Appendix C – Flowchart outlining the Committee process for managing examination recommendations 8.1 - 8.4