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| Deputy Vice-Chancellor’s Office  Postgraduate Office |

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| Selection of Thesis Examiners |

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Selection of appropriate examiners is a vital part of the assessment process. While it is impossible to provide a set of rules for the appointment of examiners this document aims to highlight key issues that should be given consideration in the selection process. There will always be a few exception cases that can be considered in discussion with the Dean of Postgraduate Research.

***The underlying principle in guiding the selection of examiners is to ensure that the thesis should be examined in a fair and transparent manner by independent experts.***

***PhD Thesis Examiners:***

For students enrolled after December 1st 2007, there are 2 external examiners to be appointed – an “oral examiner” and an “international examiner”.

“Oral examiner”: Examines the thesis and submits a written report. Attends the oral examination.

“International examiner”: Examines the thesis and submits a written report. Does not attend the oral examination.

“Oral examination organizer”: An independent academic, usually from within the candidate’s department, who arranges (in consultation with the Postgraduate Office), and chairs, the oral examination.

An important part of the PhD examination process at UC is the oral examination. Except under the most extreme of circumstances, all students will have an oral examination. The default format of the oral is a face-to-face meeting of the student, oral examiner, supervisor(s) and oral examination organizer. Choice of the oral examiner needs to take into account the ability for the examiner to attend, in person, the oral examination. Accordingly, an oral examiner from New Zealand or the east coast of Australia is preferred. If, for a given student, no suitable examiner can be identified within this region, consideration can be given to appointing a more distant examiner and conducting the oral examination with a video-conferencing link to the oral examiner.

The international examiner is asked to provide a written report, within which specific issues, or questions for discussion in the oral examination may be identified. The international examiner is not, however, expected to attend the oral examination, and it is up to the oral examination chair to ensure that the issues raised by this examiner are indeed considered in the oral examination. Accordingly, there are no geographical constraints on the location of the international examiner.

All thesis examiners should have expertise in the topic and/or methodology of the thesis and be able to evaluate whether or not the thesis meets the criteria for the award of the PhD. In addition to examiner expertise, however, a number of additional points should be considered:

* ***Experience*** – in cases where a relatively junior academic, with little experience as a PhD examiner, is nominated as one of the examiners, consideration should be given to appointing a more senior experienced academic as the other examiner.
* ***Independence*** – while it is acknowledged that academia is a “small world” and, especially in some research areas, there is a high degree of connectedness between academics in the field, it is important to ensure (to the extent possible) that independent examiners are appointed. Some guidelines are provided below:
  + Examiners should not be engaged in any on-going collaborations with members of the student’s supervisory team
  + Examiners should not be currently engaged in the joint supervision of students with members of the student’s supervisory team
  + If an examiner is an ex-colleague at UC then they should have left UC prior to the student enrolling in the PhD
  + If an examiner is an ex-visitor to UC then they should not have worked with the student during their visit or provided the student with any feedback regarding their thesis research.
  + If the examiner is an ex-student of the supervisor there must have been no overlap in time between the examiner (the ex-student) and the candidate being at UC.
* ***Diversity*** – while again acknowledging the relatively small pool of potential examiners in a number of domains, it is important that the same examiners are not “over-used” in thesis examination, and especially not the same combination of examiners.

***Masters Thesis Examiners:***

The same principles regarding the examination process and the appointment of examiners as outlined above for PhD candidates applies to Masters thesis candidates.

As with the PhD, there are 2 examiners to be appointed – one internal and one external examiner.

As there is no oral examination there are no geographical constraints regarding the location of the external examiner (there may be exceptions to this in the Creative Arts where a thesis cannot simply be sent to the examiner but the examiner must travel to UC to view it).

The internal examiner is a member of the UC staff who was not a part of the student’s supervisory team. Although normally the examiner would come from the student’s Department/School this is not essential and a relevant expert might be in a different Department/School. In cases where there are no suitable examiners who have not been involved in the student’s thesis research then consideration will be given to the appointment of two external examiners or to the appointment of a member of the supervisory team (but not the senior supervisor) as the internal examiner. Wherever possible, however, the latter option will be avoided.