Thesis Examination Procedure

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Next review
3.4	Director of Governance	18 August 2021	18 August 2021	January 2023

Procedure Statement		
Purpose	This procedure describes the thesis examination processes for all higher degree research Programs at UNSW Sydney.	
Scope	It applies to all higher degree research candidates, supervisors, Postgraduate Research Coordinators, Faculty Committees and other positions responsible for management of higher degree research. The relevant Conditions for Award Policy and Oral Examination Procedure 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		

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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 higher degree research (HDR) candidates, supervisors, Postgraduate Research Coordinators (PGC) and the Higher Degree Committee (HDC) in the examination process.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. The candidate

Higher degree 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 the responsible conduct of research 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. Examiners

Examiners are responsible for:

- Providing 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.

2.4. Postgraduate Research Coordinator (PGC)

The Postgraduate Research Coordinator (PGC) is responsible for:

- Nominating suitable examiners of the thesis to the HDC based on 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.

2.5. 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)) is 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.

2.6. Dean of Graduate Research or Delegate

The Dean of Graduate Research is responsible for:

- The implementation of the procedures.
- Determining whether a higher degree research candidate 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 are in a logical and cogent sequence presenting an argument that supports the main findings of the thesis.

(c) An independent discussion that integrates the significant findings of the thesis.

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

(e) 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 also meet the above minimum requirements.

(f) 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. Faculty HDCs will provide guidance on discipline specific requirements.

4. Examination Criteria

Examiners are expected to submit to the University a recommendation (as detailed in the relevant *Conditions of Award Policy*) 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?

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- Is there a clear and discernible lucidity in the presented research, its arguments and conclusions?
- Is the thesis clearly, accurately and logically written?

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 can be examined.

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 must 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 must not contain any illustrations. Candidates must 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 *Thesis/Dissertation Sheet*, *Originality Statement* and the *Inclusion of Publications Statement* (see section 5.2) as outlined in Appendix A and the GRS Guidelines. The *Copyright* and *Authenticity Statements* must be included in the final officially approved version of the thesis submitted to the library.

5.2. Incorporation of Publications into the Thesis

UNSW is supportive of candidates publishing their research results during their candidature. A 'Publication' includes work that has either been published or submitted for publication during candidature. Candidates must provide full details of whether there are publications in the thesis on the *Inclusion of Publications Statement* (see Appendix A). If publications or part thereof are included, the statement must be completed and signed off by both the primary supervisor and the PGC. Faculties may have discipline-specific guidelines that should also be consulted.

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

(a) Published work may only be included in the thesis if the research and its publication occurred during candidature for the degree.

(b) It is expected that the candidate is the primary author of the publications or manuscripts included in the thesis.

(c) 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.

(d) In cases where other co-authors are also higher degree research 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.

(e) 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.

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(f) 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.

(g) 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 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

Examiners must be nominated and approved prior to thesis submission wherever possible. To expediate this, the following process applies:

(a) 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.

(b) In some cases, the expected date of submission will change from the original recorded on the NOITS. In such cases, candidates can contact the HDR Examination team of the Graduate Research School to update the expected submission date. There is no need to re-submit the NOITS.

In addition, there are three scenarios which require approval before submission of the thesis:

5.3.1 Restricted Access of the Thesis

(a) All theses 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. The Library will be informed of approved restrictions and will apply these for the agreed period.

(b) 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. A *Restricted Access form* for this request 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

(a) 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.

(b) 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.

(c) 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.

(d) 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 Terms

(a) 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;

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- Supporting documentation from the primary supervisor and the PGC confirming that the candidate will not be disadvantaged by submitting early; and
- Confirmation via the Research Progress Review process that a high level of achievement throughout the candidature has been achieved.

5.4. Plagiarism

(a) UNSW requires researchers to produce work that is robust and accurate and conducted in accordance with the UNSW *Research Code of Conduct* and related policies and procedures. It is expected that the supervisors will use iThenticate as a tool to support the writing process throughout the candidature.

(b) The primary supervisor must 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 Process

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

5.5.2 Supervisor's Certificate not Approved

In cases where the primary supervisor believes that they cannot sign the supervisor's certificate, the following process is required:

- 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

6.1. Selection Process

(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.

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(b) If the primary supervisor has failed to provide suitable recommendations within 4 weeks of the candidate submitting their thesis for examination, the PGC must 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, 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 external to the enrolling institution. An exception to this is for the Master of Philosophy Program, which may have one examiner internal to the institution.
- Be free from any real or perceived conflict of interest (COI), as per the UNSW *Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management 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
- Be willing to serve as the examiner on the Examination Panel if an oral examination is required (see the *Oral Examination Procedure* 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.

6.2. Information Provided to Examiners During the Nomination Process

Primary supervisors are responsible for making the initial contact with potential examiners. The information provided to examiners should include:

- The UNSW examination model, including written and oral components
- 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.

6.2.1 Change to examination date

(a) The examiner will be notified by the GRS of any changes to the planned submission date after an examiner has accepted and the HDC has approved their nomination.

(b) 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. The primary supervisor should also consult other members of the supervisory team about potential examiners and avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest (COI) with the potential examiners prior to their nomination. Supervisors should consult the UNSW *Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management Policy* and the UNSW *Higher Degree Examiner Conflict of Interest Guide* to assist them in this process.

In cases where any real or perceived COI exists the following process applies:

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(a) The COI must be declared by the primary supervisor, and any other members of the candidate's supervisory team, on the Nomination of Examiners form.

(b) 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 in the decision-making process.

(c) 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 following process applies:

(a) the UNSW Nomination of Examiners form must be completed and submitted by the primary supervisor. A robust justification of the suitability of the examiner must be provided, along with the examiner's contact details and the declaration of any COI issues (see Section 6.3).

(b) The completed UNSW NOE form should be submitted to the PGC for endorsement ideally 2 weeks before the submission of the candidate's thesis.

(c) The PGC is responsible for reviewing the 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 notifies the GRS of their approval.

(d) 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 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. Examiner Identity and Candidate Contact

(a) The identity of the examiners will be known to the candidate throughout the examination process.

(b) Candidates 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 an allegation of academic misconduct.

(c) 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.

(d) The procedure for contact between candidate and examiner during examination 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.

In cases of Oral Examination, examiners will be provided with additional information about the oral examination process.

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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 outlined in Section 6.

(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

(a) In cases of oral examination, the *Oral Examination Procedure* must be consulted at this stage.

(b) In all other cases, 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.

(c) 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.

(d) The award of the degree occurs once appropriate corrections have been made to the satisfaction of the Dean of Graduate Research and the recommendation to award the degree is approved.

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. 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 advises the PGC whether they are satisfied with the changes.
- The PGC will review the candidate's responses and revised thesis. When the PGC believes that the candidate has satisfactorily addressed the examiner comments, they will make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research to award the degree.
- 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 recommendation, and the reports will be sent to the PGC for a recommendation on the level of corrections required. The GRS will send the examiner reports and the PGC's recommendation to the candidate and primary supervisor. 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.

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- 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 make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research to award the degree.

8.3. Revise and Re-examine

If one or more examiners recommend Revise and Re-examine, the Dean of Graduate Research will review the reports and provide advice to the HDC. Examiner reports will be sent to the PGC for review and discussion with the primary supervisor and the candidate, after which the PGC will provide a recommendation to the HDC.

(a) The HDC will assess both reports and make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research on the amount of time that the candidate needs to address the concerns raised in the reports. It is expected that the candidate will have to re-enrol for at least two terms to carry out the required work and revisions.

(b) 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 in Section 7.4 of the Research Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure.

(c) The GRS will advise the candidate, primary supervisor and PGC 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 copies of both examiner reports.

(d) 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.

(e) The candidate is only permitted to revise and be re-examined once. As such, examiners cannot submit a further recommendation of revise and re-examine.

(f) Once the examination report(s) on the revised thesis has been received by the GRS, the examination process will continue as in Section 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 will first review the report(s) and provide advice to the HDC. The examiner reports will 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.

(a) 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).

(b) The HDC's recommendation will be considered by the Dean of Graduate Research, after which the formal examination outcome will be communicated to the candidate, primary supervisor and PGC.

(c) The GRS will also provide the candidate with copies of both examiner reports. The candidate must be given written notification of the reasons for this recommendation.

8.5. Divergent Reports

In some examinations, there may be 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 examiner reports have equal weighting and as such, a

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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.

(a) As such cases are complex in nature, the outcome is determined on a case-by-case basis. The Dean of Graduate Research will review both reports to confirm they are correct procedurally and provide advice.

(b) The 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.

(c) 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. In the latter case, the Oral Examination Procedure must be followed.

(d) Once decided, the HDC's recommendation will be considered by the Dean of Graduate Research, after which the formal examination outcome along with copies of both examiner reports will be communicated 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:

- 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 must submit their recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research or their delegate.

8.7. Non-availability of Examiners

(a) In cases where re-examination is required, the original examiners may decline to re-examine the thesis. In such cases, the HDC should seek further advice on the revised thesis from an independent assessor (as described in Section 8.6).

(b) The independent assessor should consider all the material provided, weighing up the reports from the examiners. It should be noted that the assessor is not being asked to examine the thesis, but to consider all the material above and make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research 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 B.

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.

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Accountabilities	
Responsible Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Training & Entrepreneurship) and Dean of Graduate Research
Contact Officer	Director, Graduate Research School
Supporting Information	
Legislative Compliance	*Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth) Higher Education Standards Framework 2015 Australian Qualifications Framework 2011
Parent Document (Policy)	Doctor of Philosophy Conditions for Award Policy Master of Philosophy Conditions for Award Policy
Supporting Documents	Nil
Related Documents	Oral Examination Procedure 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 Publication Dispute Management Procedure Research Misconduct Procedure Research Handling Research Material & Data Procedure UNSWorks Digital Preservation Policy UNSWorks Digital Preservation Procedure
Superseded Documents	Thesis Examination Procedure, version 3.3
File Number	2012/01615
Definitions and Acronyms	
ADRT	Associate Dean Research Training
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HDC	Higher Degree Committee
PGC	Postgraduate Research Coordinator

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
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

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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 © 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.
3.1	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)	5 November 2018	1 January 2019	Minor amendment to accommodate 3+ academic calendar
3.2	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)	22 November 2019	1 January 2020	Minor amendments made to accommodate oral examination process for MPhil programs.
3.3	Director of Governance	10 June 2020	10 June 2020	Section 6.1(c) and 6.3 links to Higher Degree Examiner Conflict of Interest Guide updated
3.4	Director of Governance	18 August 2021	18 August 2021	Section 5.1(a) and Appendix A links to GRS Thesis Format Guide updated

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*.

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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 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 must 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 *Copyright and Authenticity statements* must be included in the final digital copies of the thesis submitted to the library.

Copyright Statement

'I hereby grant the University of New South Wales or its agents a non-exclusive licence to archive and to make available (including to members of the public) my thesis or dissertation in whole or part in the University libraries in all forms of media, now or here after known. I acknowledge that I retain all intellectual property rights which subsist in my thesis or dissertation, such as copyright and patent rights, subject to applicable law. I also retain the right to use all or part of my thesis or dissertation in future works (such as articles or books).'

'For any substantial portions of copyright material used in this thesis, written permission for use has been obtained, or the copyright material is removed from the final, public version of the thesis.'

Authenticity Statement

'I certify that the Library deposit digital copy is a direct equivalent of the final officially approved version of my thesis.'

4. Inclusion of Publications Statement

All thesis copies must contain an *Inclusion of Publications Statement.* This statement provides information to the Examiner and the University about whether there are publications included as part of the thesis, and the level of contribution that the candidate has made to each of these.

The statement must include:

- Whether there are publications in the thesis
- 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 is provided on the GRS website.

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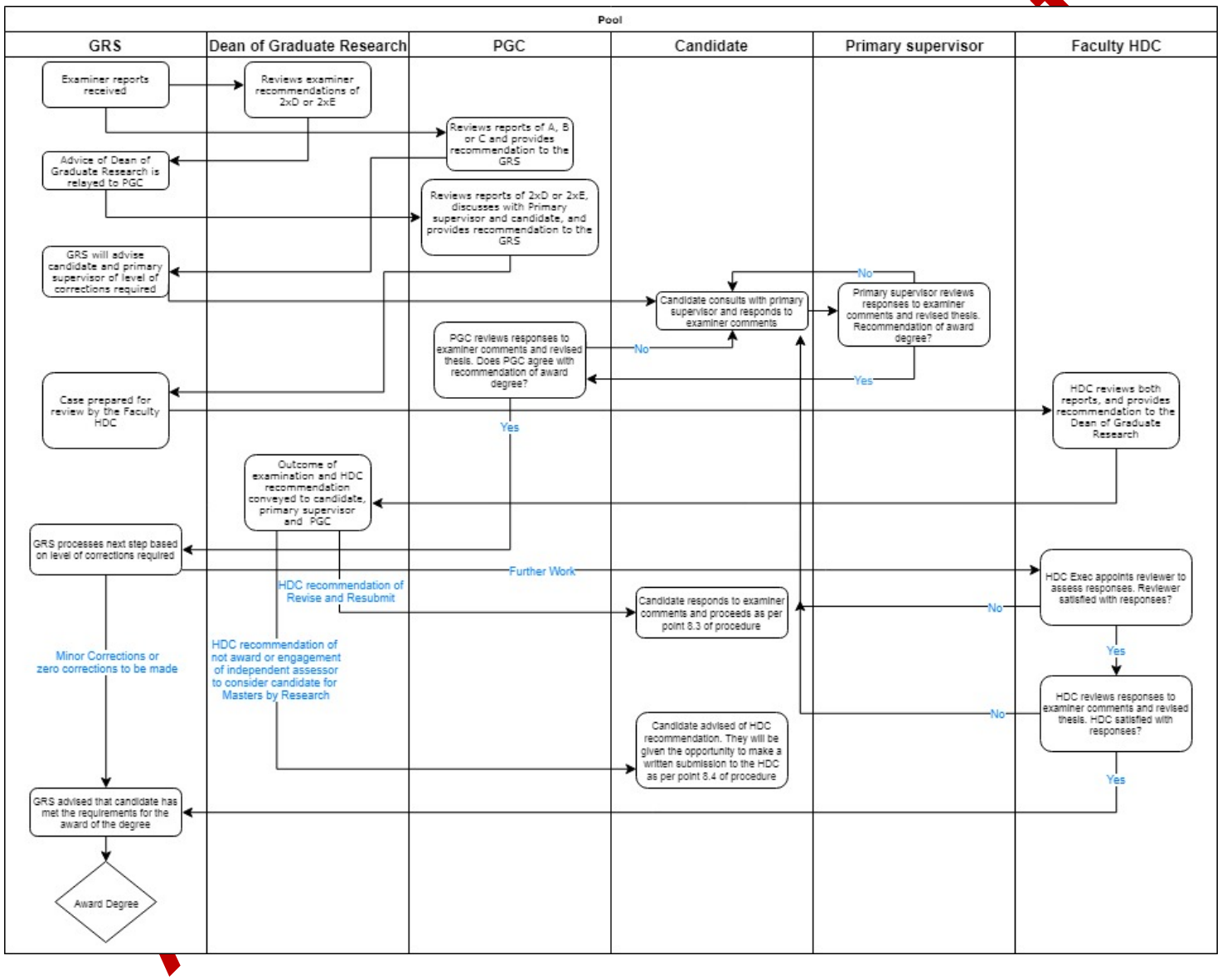
Appendix B – Flowchart outlining the Committee process for managing examination recommendations 8.1 - 8.4