

Selection of Thesis Examiners

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Selection of appropriate examiners is an important step of a thesis examination process. While it is impossible to provide a set of all-encompassing rules for the appointment of examiners, this document aims to highlight key issues that should be considered. There will always be exceptional cases that can be discussed with the Dean of Postgraduate Research.

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

Who to Appoint?

It is the responsibility of the Senior Supervisor to nominate suitable examiners, and to obtain agreement from the nominated examiners prior to submitting the examiner nomination form to Te Kura Tāura | UC Graduate School. Potential examiners can be discussed in advance with the candidate but it is not the candidate's choice as to who the examiners are. Subsequent to the examiners' nomination, the candidate is informed and can make a case to the Dean of Postgraduate Research that one or both examiners not be appointed.

Thesis examiners should have expertise in the topic and/or the methodology of the thesis, and be able to evaluate the thesis against the criteria for the award of the degree. In addition to this, a number of other points should be considered:

- ***The nature of the thesis*** – where a thesis is in an unusual or interdisciplinary area, or in an unconventional format (e.g. thesis with publications), care should be taken to make sure that the potential examiners are apprised of the situation and are comfortable with examining a thesis of that type.
- ***Experience*** – where a person with limited thesis examination experience is to be appointed, consideration should be given also to appointing a more experienced person as the other examiner.
- ***Independence*** – some fields involve a “small world” with a high degree of interconnectedness. However, it is important to ensure (to the extent possible) that appointed examiners are independent of each other, the candidate and the supervisory team. Here are some guidelines of preference:

- Examiners should not be engaged in on-going collaborations with member(s) of the student's supervisory team.
- Examiners should not be currently engaged with members of the student's supervisory team in the joint supervision of other students.
- An examiner who is an ex-UC colleague should have left UC prior to the student's initial enrolment in the degree.
- An examiner who is, or has been, a visitor to UC should not have worked with the student or provided the student with feedback regarding the thesis research.
- An examiner who is an ex-student of UC should have had no overlap of enrolment period with the candidate.
- **Diversity** – while again acknowledging the relatively small pool of potential examiners in some domains, it is important that the same examiners, and especially the same combinations of examiners, are not “over-used”.

Doctoral Thesis Examinations:

Except under the most extreme of circumstances, all doctoral students at UC have to undertake an oral examination, which is organised (with assistance from Te Kura Tāura | UC Graduate School) and overseen by an independent member of the academic staff, usually from within the candidate's department or school, who is referred to as the “Examination Chair”.

Two independent external examiners are appointed for doctoral examinations, one of whom is designated as the “Oral Examiner”. Both examiners read the thesis and submit independent written reports within which specific issues and questions for discussion in the oral examination may be identified. The Oral Examiner also participates in the oral examination.

The oral examinations can be conducted in-person or via video link. In either case, those who are normally involved are the student, the Oral Examiner, supervisor(s) and the Examination Chair. The second examiner is not expected to participate in the oral examination but may do so (normally by video link). If that examiner is not involved, it is up to the Examination Chair to ensure that any issues or questions raised by this examiner are considered in the oral examination.

The choice of the Oral Examiner must take into account the availability of that person to participate in the oral examination. If the Oral Examiner is from New Zealand they may be invited, at the University's expense (see below) to attend the examination in person. An Oral Examiner from further afield would normally participate by video-link.

Further information can be found here: [ACGR-Conflict-of-Interest-in-Examination-Guidelines.pdf](#)

Master's Thesis Examinations:

Two master's thesis examiners are appointed on the recommendation of the supervisory team – one "Internal Examiner" (normally from within UC) and one External Examiner.

There is no oral examination and there are no geographical constraints on the External Examiner (except for cases in the creative arts where the examiner must travel to UC to assess the student's examinable materials).

The Internal Examiner is a member of the UC staff who is not a part of the student's supervisory team. Although normally from the student's department/school, this is not essential. Where there are no suitable Internal Examiners who have not been involved in the student's thesis research, consideration may be given to the appointment of two External Examiners or (in extreme situations) to the appointment of a member of the supervisory team (but not the senior supervisor) as the Internal Examiner.