

APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS GUIDELINES

It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to nominate suitable examiners. The [Appointment of Examiners form](#) is to be completed by the principal supervisor and then sent to the Head of School/Nominee for sign-off. It will then be forwarded to Graduate Research. See [Process](#) for more details and the [Thesis Examination Guidelines](#) for information on the University's thesis examination process.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL EXAMINERS

The candidate should be given the opportunity to suggest names of individuals who may be considered appropriate/inappropriate to examine their thesis. However, candidates are not to contact any potential examiners and the School is responsible for the final nomination. The names of nominated examiners are not to be disclosed to the candidate.

SELECTING EXAMINERS

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. In doing so there should be no conflicts of interest, or the potential for perceived conflicts of interest, between examiners and the candidate, the supervisors or the institution. (A list of potential conflicts of interest is provided on the [University website](#)). All examiners must be external to the University of Newcastle.

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 degree. In addition to examiner expertise, however, their independence, examination experience and the diversity of examiners should be considered – see below.

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 that, as far as possible, independent examiners are appointed. Some guidelines are provided below:

- Examiners should not:
 - be employed by the University of Newcastle in any capacity or have been employed at the University within the five years preceding thesis submission;
 - be engaged in any on-going collaborations with members of the candidate's supervisory team;
 - have collaborated or published research with either candidate or members of the supervisory team in the 5 years prior to thesis submission;
 - have worked with the candidate or supervisors on matters relating to the thesis research; or
 - be currently engaged in the joint supervision of students with members of the student's supervisory team or have been engaged in co-supervision within the 5 years prior to thesis submission.
- If an examiner is an ex-colleague then they should have left the University of Newcastle prior to the candidate enrolling in the degree to be examined
- If an examiner is an ex-visitor to the University 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 the University
- The examiner should have no commercial interest in the outcomes of the research reported in the thesis to be examined.

Experience

Examiners should have:

- a qualification of at least the same level as that for which the candidate is being examined;
- HDR supervisory and/or examination experience. If one examiner is a junior academic then consideration should be given to ensuring that the other examiner is experienced, and;
- some familiarity with the Australian HDR system, including the examination system.

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.

- It is strongly preferred that at least one of the examiners is based outside of Australia
- The two examiners must be at different institutions
- Candidates from same supervisor should not have the same pair of examiners.

Indigenous Research

Where the HDR candidate identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or the thesis is on an Indigenous research topic, it is recommended that at least one of the proposed examiners is Indigenous or has expertise in Indigenous research.

PROCESS

1. The **Principal Supervisor** should:

- Contact potential examiners and advise them of the approximate date of submission of the thesis, the length of the thesis and the expectation that their report is required within two months of receipt of the thesis
- Complete all sections of the [Appointment of Examiners form](#), providing all necessary information, and forward to the Head of School.

2. The **Head of School Nominee** should:

- Consult with supervisors about the appointments, ensuring that there is no conflict of interest
- Determine that sufficient justification has been provided and approve the Appointment of Examiners form
- Approve the examiners, ensuring that there is no conflict of interest
- Forward the completed form to Graduate Research (thesis@newcastle.edu.au)

MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

Examiner details (and reports) are to remain CONFIDENTIAL until the Research Training Sub-Committee has made a determination and then they may only be released by Graduate Research with the permission of the examiners. Should an examiner requested anonymity, their name will not be released and this must be respected.

It should be noted that only the Dean of Graduate Research, or delegate, may communicate with the examiners regarding the examination process while the thesis is under examination.

INFORMATION FOR EXAMINERS

- In accepting an invitation to examine a thesis, an examiner undertakes to maintain confidentiality with regard to the content of the thesis and of their report.
- The approximate honorarium paid to external examiners for a Masters thesis is \$A278.00; for a PhD thesis it is \$A495.00. The honorarium amount is recommended by Universities Australia and varies periodically.
- In order for the honorarium to be paid, examiners working within Australia will need to confirm they have working rights for Australia.
- A hard copy thesis will only be provided to examiners if the thesis cannot be submitted electronically or the examiner has requested a hard copy.