



APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

It is crucial that all examiners act with integrity and in the academic interests of the institution. Conflicts of interest (COI) must be avoided so that a thesis may be assessed independently and free from any perception of bias or preferential treatment.

It is important to note the following:

- a conflict of interest may be with the institution, the supervisor or the candidate.
- the existence of a conflict of interest does not automatically preclude a nominee being approved by the Dean of Graduate Research as a thesis examiner. When considering a nominee, the Dean looks at the nature and severity of any conflict(s) of interest.
- the aim of the COI guidelines is to protect the candidate, examiner and the university against potential negative perceptions during the thesis examination process. It is not a presumption that an individual will behave inappropriately.
- In the interest of clarity, the examples of conflict of interest have been divided into two groups:
 - **Major conflicts** that are considered substantial and would normally result in the non-appointment of the examiner
 - **Minor conflicts** that should be declared and explained but should not inhibit the appointment of the examiner. However please be aware that several conflicts of interest that are individually minor may in combination be considered substantial.

For more information please contact Graduate Research: Thesis@newcastle.edu.au

1. MAJOR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST RESULTING IN NON-APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINER

A. CONFLICT WITH THE CANDIDATE

Working Relationship

- 1A1. Examiner has co-authored a paper with the candidate within the last five years.
- 1A2. Examiner has worked with the candidate on matters regarding the thesis e.g. previous member of the advisory/supervisory team.
- 1A3. Examiner has employed the candidate or been employed by the candidate within the last five years.
- 1A4. Examiner is in negotiation to directly employ or be employed by the candidate.
- 1A5. Examiner has acted as a referee for the candidate for employment.

Personal Relationship

- 1A6. Examiner is a known relative of the candidate.
- 1A7. Examiner is a friend, associate or mentor of the candidate.
- 1A8. Examiner and the candidate have an existing or a previous emotional relationship of de facto, are co-residents or are members of a common household.

Legal Relationship

- 1A9. Examiner is or was married to the candidate.
- 1A10. Examiner is legally family (for example, stepfather, sister-in-law) to the candidate.

- 1A11. Examiner is either a legal guardian or dependent of the candidate or has power of attorney for the candidate.

Business, Professional and/or Social Relationships

- 1A12. Examiner is currently in or has had a business relationship with the candidate in the last five years (for example, partner in a small business or employment).
1A13. Examiner is in a social relationship with the candidate, such as co-Trustees of a Will or godparent.

1 (B) CONFLICT WITH THE SUPERVISOR

Working Relationship

- 1B1. Examiner was a candidate of the supervisor within the past five years.
1B2. Examiner has co-supervised with the supervisor in the past five years.
1B3. Examiner holds a patent with the supervisor granted no more than eight years ago and which is still in force.
1B4. Examiner had directly employed or was employed by the supervisor in the past five years.
1B5. Examiner holds a current grant with the supervisor.
1B6. Examiner has co-authored a publication with the supervisor in the past five years.

Personal Relationship

- 1B7. Examiner is in negotiation to directly employ or be employed by the supervisor.
1B8. Examiner is a known relative of the supervisor.
1B9. Examiner and the supervisor have an existing or a previous emotional relationship of de facto, are co-residents or are members of a common household.

Legal Relationship

- 1B10. Examiner is or was married to the supervisor.
1B11. Examiner is legally family (for example, stepfather, sister-in-law) to the supervisor.
1B12. Examiner is either a legal guardian or dependent of the supervisor or has power of attorney for the supervisor.

Business, Professional and/or Social Relationships

- 1B13. Examiner is currently in or has had a business relationship with the supervisor in the last five years (for example, partner in a small business or employment).
1B14. Examiner is in a social relationship with the candidate, such as co-Trustees of a Will or godparent.

1 (C) CONFLICT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Working Relationship

- 1C1. Examiner is currently in negotiation with the University of Newcastle for a work contract (including a supervision contract).

Other Relationship

- 1C2. Examiner has received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Newcastle within the past five years.
1C3. Examiner graduated from the University of Newcastle within the past five years.
1C4. Examiner has/had a formal grievance with the University of Newcastle.

Professional Relationship

- 1C5. Examiner is a current member of staff or has a current Honorary, Adjunct or Emeritus position with the University of Newcastle or has had such a position during the candidature of the candidate or in the past 5 years.

1 (D) CONFLICT WITH THE SUBJECT MATTER

Research

- 1D1. Examiner has a direct commercial interest in the outcomes of the research.

1 (E) CONFLICT WITH OTHER EXAMINERS

Working Relationship

- 1E1. Examiner works in the same department/school as another examiner.

Personal Relationship

- 1E2. Examiner is married to, closely related to or has a close personal relationship with another examiner.

2. MINOR CONFLICT OF INTEREST THAT SHOULD BE ADVISED TO GRADUATE RESEARCH

The conflicts of interest listed below are normally considered minor in isolation and would not inhibit the appointment of an examiner. However, please be aware that several conflicts of interest that are individually minor may in combination be considered substantial.

2 (A) CONFLICT WITH THE CANDIDATE

Business, Professional and/or Social Relationships

- 2A1. Examiner has a current professional relationship, such as shared membership of a Board or Committee (including editorial and grant decision boards), with the candidate.
- 2A2. Examiner has had personal contact with the candidate that may give rise to the perception that the examiner may be dealing with the candidate in a less than objective manner.

2 (B) CONFLICT WITH THE SUPERVISOR

Business, Professional and/or Social Relationships

- 2B1. Examiner has a current professional relationship, such as shared membership of a Board or Committee (including editorial and grant decision boards), with the supervisor.
- 2B2. Examiner has had personal contact with the supervisor that may give rise to the perception that the examiner may be dealing with the candidate in a less than objective manner.

2 (C) CONFLICT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Working Relationship

- 2C1. Examiner is currently working for the University of Newcastle pro bono (for example, on a review).

- 2C2. Examiner has examined for the University of Newcastle 2 or more times in the past 12 months and/or 5 or more times in the past 5 years (mitigating circumstances may involve examination for candidates across different Schools/Institutes of the University. Multiple use of one examiner within a School/Institute or by one supervisory team will not be approved).

Professional Relationship

- 2C3. Examiner has a current professional relationship with the University of Newcastle (for example, membership of a Board or Committee).
- 2C4. Examiner has a current visiting position with the University of Newcastle or has had such a position during the candidature of the candidate or in the past 5 years.

2 (D) CONFLICT WITH OTHER EXAMINERS

Professional Relationship

- 2D1. Examiner has a professional relationship with another examiner.