

**FNU EXTERNAL EXAMINER GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH DEGREES**

**Prepared by:** OPVCR

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# Appointment of Examiners

There are always two external examiners appointed for each candidate for the examination of Masters by Research and PhD thesis and oral examination (viva voce). For the appointment of examiners, please follow the *FNU Nomination of Examiners Guidelines*.

The principal supervisor is responsible for proposing the appointment of examiners.

Recommendations should be submitted (on the *Nomination of Examiners Form*) to the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Research (OPVCR) for HDRC approval at least three months before the anticipated date of thesis submission.

The Higher Degrees by Research Committee (HDRC) shall approve the appointment of examiners for thesis examination. The role of HDRC is to ensure that the external examiners have sufficient impartiality to fulfil the role and have sufficient experience of examining the thesis and to conduct the oral examination (viva voce) for the two research degrees.

In the case where subject specialisation becomes an issue and examiners cannot be appointed due to lack of experience in the examination, a request should be made to HDRC in writing justifying concerns which will be used to deliberate on a decision. The justification should enable HDRC to determine whether or not to appoint a less experienced examiner when the set criteria for an appointment cannot be met.

# Dispatch of the Thesis to the Examiners

The thesis will be submitted online via Moodle, Turnitin, Dropbox or any subsequent software that the Senate approves.

If the examiners will require a hard copy of the thesis, it is the Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) candidate's responsibility to prepare a loosely bound hard copy after a soft copy has been run through Turnitin to be sent to the examiner/s by the OPVCR.

# Communication During the Examination Process

### ***Between Examiners***

* + 1. Examiner information and details shall not be disclosed to other examiners until oral examination; or during the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis.
    2. Examiners shall not identify and communicate with other examiners who are examining the same thesis for a particular candidate until the oral examination, or at the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis.

### ***Between Examiners and Students***

1. The names of examiners may be disclosed to students after the examination reports have been received. No person including the supervisor(s) shall contact the examiner on their own or on behalf of the student regarding the thesis or examination during the examination process (i.e. from submission to award of degree).

* If a student or any person on behalf of the student is found to be communicating with the examiner during the process of examination, the examination must be discontinued; and
* a new examination process must commence with newly commissioned examiners.

Note: *Breaches of the above may result in disciplinary action*.

### ***Between the Examiners and HDR Supervisors***

The examiners are not to communicate with the HDR supervisors during the examination process.

### ***Between the University and Examiners***

1. OPVCR staff will contact examiners:

* to arrange the examination of the thesis;
* for an oral examination;
* for the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis; and
* to remind examiners if the progress of the report is delayed.

1. The OPVCR will inform the examiners of the outcome of the examination at the conclusion of the examination.
2. The students are provided with the names of the examiners at the conclusion of the examination process if the examiners allow their names to be disclosed.

The OPVCR may provide the student with notice of the completion of each of the following stages of the examination process:

1. thesis submitted for examination;
2. thesis sent to examiners and reports pending;
3. all examiners have submitted reports;
4. the relevant committee is considering recommendations from examiners;
5. notification of the result of the examination;
6. awaiting comment from the student regarding the result of the examination;
7. student to fulfil the conditions of the award, including thesis repository in the University library;
8. student to re-enroll if required for a revise and resubmit outcome;
9. outcome of the oral examination; and
10. conditions of award fulfilled and degree may be awarded.

# Thesis Examination

The examiners are not known to each other until the time of oral examination (viva voce). They should prepare independent thesis examination reports on the thesis examined using the *Doctor of Philosophy/Masters by Research Thesis Examination Form*. The HDR candidate is to address the issues in the examiner reports approved by examiners (if required) and HDRC before the candidate can proceed to oral examination (viva voce).

An award may be restricted for which the candidate was registered in the first instance because the examiners recommend major corrections and re-presentation of the thesis. In this case, a full report should be provided to the candidate informing areas of unsatisfactory work, and detailing the areas for improvement.

The external examiners' reports will indicate if the thesis corrections are to be approved by the candidates' supervisors only or re-submission of the thesis requiring re-examination by both external examiners.

Based on the examiners' reports, HDRC will decide on the time to complete the corrections by the HDR candidate.

Major corrections to the thesis may require a revised submission of the thesis, which is then re-presented to the examining team. In all cases, major revisions and re-presentation of thesis for examination shall be satisfactory to both external examiners. Examiners shall record revision and or re-presentation outcomes in the *Doctor of Philosophy/Masters by Research Thesis Examination Form.*

The examiners' reports will be endorsed by HDRC prior to the candidate proceeding to the oral examination.

# Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

All candidates enrolled in for Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Masters by Research Degrees are required to go through the oral examination (viva voce) after the written thesis examination. The candidate is to incorporate all the changes suggested by the examiners to the satisfaction of the examiners or their supervisors based on the examination reports.

# Arrangements for the Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

The OPVCR and HDRC shall be responsible for making oral examination arrangements. OPVCR will be responsible for liaising with the external examiners and the candidate for location, venue, date, and a suitable time for the oral examination (viva voce).

The OPVCR will inform the HDRC of the date to ensure an independent chair for the oral examination (viva voce) is appointed. The OPVCR is also responsible for making arrangements about the attendance of the supervisor(s) for moral support, liaising with the chair of the oral exam, technology, and Zoom arrangements where necessary.

All oral examinations (viva voce) will be held in the OPVCR Board Room (with padded walls) for the confidentiality of the examination process.

One examiner will be invited to FNU for the oral examination (viva voce), and the second examiner will link via Zoom, Skype, or another similar video conferencing tool.

# Appointment of an Independent Chair for Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

An independent chair on behalf of the University shall be appointed for the oral examination (viva voce) in all cases. The independent chair will be a senior academic (preferably at the professor level) who must not be part of the examining team. The role of the independent chair is to ensure that the oral examination is conducted in accordance with the *FNU HDR Policy and Procedure,* and ethical standards for examination are upheld at all times.

While making an appointment of the independent chair of the oral examination, the following shall be observed:

1. The independent chair will be a full-time member of staff from the University.
2. The independent chair should be external to the candidate's College.
3. The independent chair is not necessarily required to have any subject knowledge of the candidate's thesis topic.
4. The independent chair's appointment shall be made by the HDRC.

# Undertaking an Oral Examination by Video Conference

In the case where it is not possible for the examiners to be physically present for the oral examination, the examination shall be organised by video conferencing. The candidate and the independent chair are required to attend the oral examination (viva voce) from the OPVCR Board Room via video conferencing.

# Consultation Prior to the Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

The OPVCR is required to make contact with the external examiner(s) prior to the oral examination (viva voce) to determine and confirm any likely additional requirements from the examiners for the examination, e.g., demonstration of the creative component or its equivalent that is required to be in the form of whole, part or parts of the examination process.

The independent chair is required to familiarise himself/herself with such requests.

# Attendance of the Supervisor/s at the Oral Examination (Viva Voce)

Supervisors may attend the oral examination (viva voce); however, they are NOT allowed to speak and or in any way be part of the examination process. Their roles will be limited to moral support to the candidate only. To this effect, OPVCR shall consult the candidate to confirm whether or not they require their supervisor(s) to be present during the oral examination. The supervisors will not attend the oral examination (viva voce) if the candidate has expressed a preference that they should not attend.

If the candidate indicates that he/she would prefer the supervisor/s not to attend, it is the responsibility of the OPVCR to advise the supervisor(s) accordingly.

If a supervisor is allowed to attend the oral examination (viva voce), they attend only to provide moral support to the candidate.

The supervisor is required to leave the OPVCR Board Room before a formal decision on the examination outcome is taken.

If a supervisor does not attend the oral examination, s/he should be contactable during the examination so that the examiners may, if they wish, seek clarification on any particular issues which may have arisen about the work being examined.

# Roles and Responsibilities of the Examiners

* 1. The external examiners are responsible for ensuring that the thesis meets the criteria for the award of the qualification, that it is the candidate's own work, and that, for the PhD and Masters by Research degrees, the candidate can both orally and in writing, demonstrate the originality of the work.
  2. The examiners must produce independent preliminary reports using the *HDR Oral Examination Report Form* for thesis examination prior to the oral examination.
  3. The examiners conducting the oral exam must provide a final written report after the oral examination (viva voce), which should indicate how the candidate performed in relation to the written and oral examinations for the award for which the candidate was examined, and make an appropriate recommendation. The final report should be a minimum of 500 words in length and signed by the external examiners which will be managed by the independent chair and OPVCR for HDRC and Senate approvals.
  4. The external examiners must be available for the oral examination (viva voce). Where major corrections and re-submission of the thesis are required, the external examiners are required to re-examine the thesis.
  5. The external examiners will liaise with the OPVCR ([eo-pvcr@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:eo-pvcr@fnu.ac.fj) +679 3394 000 extn: 2042) regarding the arrangements for the oral examination (viva voce).
  6. **The Independent Chair (a Senior Professor at FNU)**

1. The independent chair is responsible for the arrangements for the oral examination (viva voce). The independent chair will chair the oral examination (viva voce).
2. It is important that the Independent Chair exercises a major role in ensuring that the oral examination is conducted in a supportive atmosphere.
3. On completion of the oral examination, it is the responsibility of the independent chair to inform the candidate of the recommendation of the examiners.
4. It is the responsibility of the Independent Chair to submit a written oral examination report to the OPVCR for HDRC approval.

# Preparation of Reports

Following the oral examination (viva voce), the examiners are required to produce a report using the *HDR Oral Examination Report Form*. It should adequately cover those aspects of the thesis referred to on the examiners' form, i.e. the nature and scope of the investigation, the contribution made to the subject field, the quality and originality of the submission, and where appropriate, of the experimental work included. The report should comment on the performance of the candidate at the oral examination.

The final report on the thesis should be submitted within two weeks of the oral examination (viva voce) by the examiners and the Independent Chair to OPVCR for HDRC approval.

# Approval Agency

Senate

# Revision Log

This table will be used to insert the dates of the different versions made on the policy/procedure.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date of Approval** | **Comment** |
| 1.0 | 11December 2019 | Approved by Senate |
| 2.0 | 2 March 2021 | Approved by Senate |

# Guideline Sponsor

Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor

# Contact Person

The following person may be contacted in relation to this guideline:

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