

# **FNU HIGHER DEGREES BY RESEARCH**

## **POLICY & PROCEDURE**

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**Contents**

1.0	Purpose.....	5
2.0	Scope.....	5
3.0	Policy Is Binding.....	5
4.0	Abbreviations .....	5
5.0	Policy Content.....	5
5.1	Programme Duration .....	5
5.2	Entry Requirement.....	5
5.3	Enrolment .....	6
5.4	Transfer of Candidature.....	6
5.5	Full or Part-Time Study and Course Duration.....	6
5.6	Supervisors.....	7
5.6.1	PhD Supervision .....	7
5.6.2	Masters by Research Supervision: .....	8
5.7	Probationary Candidature.....	8
5.8	Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress .....	9
5.9	Candidature Conditions .....	9
5.10	Deferral of Candidature .....	10
5.11	Leave.....	11
5.12	Study Away from the University.....	11
5.13	Other Variations to Candidature .....	11
5.14	Lapsed Candidature .....	12
5.15	Withdrawal from Programme.....	12
5.16	Thesis.....	12
5.17	Language of the Thesis .....	13
5.18	Editing of Theses by Third Parties.....	13
5.19	Eligibility to Submit for Examination.....	14
5.20	Notice of Intention to Submit.....	14
5.21	Submission Checks .....	15
5.22	Thesis Submission.....	15
5.23	Nomination of Examiners.....	16
5.24	Examiners.....	17
5.25	Replacement of Examiners.....	17
5.26	Thesis Examination .....	17
5.27	Examiners Report.....	18
5.28	Monitoring Examiners' Reports.....	18

5.29	Examiner-As-Assessor .....	18
5.30	Communication During the Examination Process .....	19
5.30.1	<i>Between Examiners</i> .....	19
5.30.2	<i>Between Examiners and Students</i> .....	19
5.30.3	<i>Between the University and Examiners</i> .....	19
5.31	Examination of a Thesis Containing Creative or Artistic Components .....	20
5.32	Thesis Examination Result .....	21
5.33	The Outcome of the Thesis Examination.....	21
5.34	Thesis Examination Confidentiality.....	22
5.35	Thesis Modifications .....	22
5.36	Restricted Access to a Thesis .....	22
5.37	Conduct of Oral Examinations .....	22
5.38	Role of the Independent Chair of Examination in an Oral Examination.....	23
5.39	Re-Enrolment for Re-Examination.....	24
5.40	Award.....	24
5.41	Posthumous Award.....	24
5.42	Lodgment of Theses in the University Library .....	24
5.43	Compliance with University Regulations Regarding the Examination Process .....	25
5.44	Appeals of Examination Decisions .....	25
6.0	HDR Procedure.....	25
6.1	Supervisor Availability.....	25
6.2	Role of the Supervisor .....	26
6.3	Progress Reviews.....	26
6.4	Candidature Confirmation.....	26
6.5	Mid Candidature Review (PhD candidates only) .....	28
6.6	Completion Seminar .....	30
6.7	Changes to Candidature.....	32
6.8	Leave Entitlements and Candidature.....	32
6.9	Lapsed Candidature Applications and Approvals .....	32
6.10	Late Submission Applications and Approvals.....	32
6.11	Thesis or Compilation Submission .....	33
6.12	Qualifications of Examiners .....	33
6.13	Approving Examiners.....	33
6.14	Commissioning of Examiners .....	34
6.15	Approving and Commissioning of Additional Examiners .....	35
6.16	Examination Process .....	35

6.17 Examination Criteria .....	35
6.18 Examination of the Thesis or Compilation .....	36
6.19 Examination of a Performance or Exhibition of Creative Works .....	36
6.20 The Outcome of Thesis Examination: Award with a Qualification or with Corrections .....	36
6.21 The Outcome of Thesis Examination: Award with Revision and Re-Examination.....	37
6.22 The Outcome of Thesis Examination: Non-Award with an Option to Award Another Degree ....	37
6.23 The Outcome of the Thesis Examination: Non-Award.....	38
6.24 Oral examination.....	38
6.25 Examination Result.....	38
7.0 Approval Agency .....	38
8.0 Revision Log .....	39
9.0 Policy Sponsor .....	39
10.0 Contact Person .....	39

## 1.0 Purpose

The objectives of this policy are to:

- a. Provide a standard framework to ensure the academic integrity of Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) at Fiji National University (FNU).
- b. Ensure that HDR programmes at FNU are governed by one unified set of policy and procedures.
- c. Ensure the University's HDR processes are transparent and that decisions affecting HDR candidates are consistent and fair.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all:

- a. HDR programmes at FNU.
- b. HDR candidates.
- c. University staff responsible for HDR programme supervision.
- d. Persons external to the University acting as HDR supervisors or examiners.

## 3.0 Policy Is Binding

This policy binds the FNU staff, students, and affiliates, including external appointees.

## 4.0 Abbreviations

HDRC	Higher Degrees by Research Committee
FNU	Fiji National University

## 5.0 Policy Content

### 5.1 Programme Duration

- a. Duration of the PhD programme is three years for full-time study and six years for part-time study.
- b. Duration of the Masters by Research programme is two years for full-time study and four years for part-time study.

### 5.2 Entry Requirement

The minimum requirements for admission to a PhD programme are:

- a. A Bachelors degree with first or upper second class honours at level 8, including a research component compromised of a thesis; or
- b. A Masters degree by coursework with a GPA of 4 or above (*FNU GPA equivalent*) at level 9;
- c. A Masters by Research degree in a relevant discipline; or
- d. Evidence of academic qualification and/or experience inclusive of research reports, or dissertations, or publications or other evidence that satisfies the Higher Degree by Research Committee (HDRC) that the applicant has developed knowledge of the field of study or cognate field and has the potential for research that is sufficient to undertake the proposed programme.

The minimum requirements for admission to a Masters by Research programme are:

- a. A Bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.5 or above (*FNU GPA equivalent*) at level 7; or
- b. A graduate diploma with a GPA of 3.25 or above (*FNU GPA equivalent*) at level 8; or
- c. A Masters by coursework at level 9; or

- d. Evidence of academic qualification and/or experience inclusive of research reports, or dissertations, or publications or other evidence that satisfies the HDRC that the applicant has developed knowledge of the field of study or cognate field and has the potential for research that is sufficient to undertake the proposed programme.

The medium of instruction at FNU is the English language. Students must be sufficiently fluent in English to pursue the HDR Programme. HDR students will provide evidence from undergraduate qualifications/other English qualifications that confirm their English language competency.

### **5.3 Enrolment**

Applicants can apply for HDR admission through the online portal on the FNU website <https://www.fnu.ac.fj/study/apply/>

### **5.4 Transfer of Candidature**

A candidate who wants to transfer to FNU from another institution will be considered by HDRC. Normally HDR candidates who have completed two-thirds of their research at another university will not be accepted.

A candidate of FNU who wants to transfer to another HDR programme at the University must:

- a. meet the eligibility requirements of the programme to which they wish to transfer; and
- b. satisfy their supervisors and HDRC of their ability to complete the programme in a timely manner.

HDRC may admit a student directly into confirmed candidature if they successfully completed the confirmation requirements in an HDR Programme at the same or higher level:

- a. at another institution; or
- b. at FNU.

Time spent towards an HDR programme at another university may be deducted from the FNU HDR programme duration if approved by HDRC.

In the case of transfer of candidature, whether from one College to another at FNU or from another university to FNU, admission will be based on the availability of supervisor(s) in the respective field of study.

Applications are to be made using the standard application form with evidence of work completed and submitted to Research Office through the Student Academic Services for HDRC approval.

### **5.5 Full or Part-Time Study and Course Duration**

Candidates may apply to study on a full or part-time basis. The Research Office/ HDRC will factor in the following to make decisions on the mode of study, either full or part-time.

- a. expected course duration;
- b. scholarship requirements;
- c. course requirements;
- d. regulatory requirements; and
- e. academic progress.

## 5.6 Supervisors

At least two supervisors will be assigned to supervise each HDR candidate, one Principal and one cosupervisor or secondary supervisor.

One of the two supervisors must be assigned the Principal supervisor. The Principal supervisor:

- a. must be a staff member of the Fiji National University;
- b. has leadership and administrative responsibility for the candidate; and
- c. must be a registered supervisor with Research Office (RO).

The Principal supervisor is expected to have in-depth knowledge of the candidate's research topic.

Co-supervisors have a more specific or secondary role in the supervision of a candidate's research.

Academic advisors or mentors with PhD qualifications may also be engaged in supervision with prior approval from the Principal supervisor. In addition, technical specialists (e.g., practitioners from industry, Ministry, NGO, TVET, etc.) who do not have a PhD qualification but have several years of experience in a particular field and contribute significantly to the research may be engaged in HDR supervision in the form of Associate Supervisor(s);

A candidate shall not be assigned a supervisor where a conflict of interest would affect a student's candidature.

A full-time candidate in the HDR programme at the University may not:

- a. supervise another candidate at either FNU or any other institution; or
- b. be a member of the advisory committee of another candidate at either FNU or any other institution.

A part-time candidate in the HDR programme who meets the supervision requirements may supervise candidates in a programme at a lower level in accordance with the AQF+1 quality assurance principle in place at FNU, with the permission of HDRC.

### 5.6.1 PhD Supervision

To qualify as a Principal supervisor, one would normally have:

- a. supervised at least one PhD to completion; or
- b. possess a PhD qualification, completed the FNU HDR Supervisor Training Programme in the past three years, be published in the field, and shall be mentored by a supervisor with HDR completion experience.

The co-supervisor or secondary supervisor can be an Early Career Researcher with PhD qualification and successfully completed the FNU HDR Supervisor Training Programme.

A co-supervisor would normally have a PhD qualification, completed the FNU HDR Supervisor Training Programme in the past three years, be published in the field, and shall be mentored by a Principal supervisor.

Adjunct supervisors would normally be appointed as co-supervisors or secondary supervisors.

For Adjunct appointments, please refer to the Adjunct Appointment SOP and Form on the HR website or contact the Department of Human Resources.

In cases where Colleges lack academics with subject expertise, Adjuncts can be appointed as Principal supervisor(s). Appointment of Adjunct Principal supervisor(s) and the remuneration should be approved by the HDRC.

### **5.6.2 Masters by Research Supervision:**

To qualify as a Principal supervisor, one would normally have:

- a) supervised at least one PhD or Masters by Research to completion; or
- b) possess a PhD qualification, completed the FNU HDR Supervisor Training Programme in the past three years, be published in the field, and shall be mentored by a supervisor with HDR completion experience.

The co-supervisor or secondary supervisor can be an Early Career Researcher with a PhD and/or Masters by Research qualification, and successfully completed the FNU HDR Supervisor Training Programme.

To be a co-supervisor, one would normally have a PhD and/or Masters by Research qualification, completed the FNU HDR Supervisor Training Programme in the past three years, be published in the field, and shall be mentored by a Principal supervisor.

Adjunct supervisors would normally be appointed as co-supervisors or secondary supervisors. For Adjunct appointments, please refer to the Adjunct Appointment SOP and Form on the HR website or contact the Department of Human Resources.

In cases where Colleges lack academics with subject expertise, Adjuncts can be appointed as Principal supervisor(s). Appointment of Adjunct Principal supervisor(s) and the remuneration should be approved by the HDRC.

### **5.7 Probationary Candidature**

All candidates are admitted on a probationary basis.

The probationary periods are until a candidate satisfactorily meets the requirements of candidature confirmation within:

- a. A minimum of six months and a maximum of eight months for a full-time Masters Degree by Research candidate.
- b. A minimum of six months and a maximum of 10 months for a full-time PhD candidate.
- c. Twice the time of a full-time candidate in the relevant HDR programme for part-time candidates.

In exceptional circumstances, HDRC may grant one extension to the probationary period, as follows:

- a. One month for full-time Master by Research candidates.
- b. Two months for full-time PhD candidates; or
- c. Twice that of a full-time candidate in the relevant HDR programme for part-time candidates.



## 5.8 Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress

Candidates are required to make satisfactory progress towards the timely completion of their programmes following the progress review expectations for their programme as outlined below:

### For full-time PhD candidates:

- a. Candidature confirmation within 10 months of enrollment.
- b. Mid candidature review within 20 months of enrollment.
- c. Completion seminar within 30 months of enrollment.
- d. Submission of the thesis for examination at the end of 36 months of enrollment.

### For part-time PhD candidates:

Twice the times listed above for full-time PhD candidates.

### For full-time Masters by Research candidates:

- a. Candidature confirmation within 8 months of enrollment.
- b. Completion seminar within 18 months of enrollment.
- c. Submission of the thesis for examination at the end of 24 months of enrollment.

### For part-time Masters by Research candidates:

Twice the times listed above for full-time Masters by Research candidates.

### HDR supervisors must monitor and report on candidates' academic progress.

They must:

- a. Discuss, confirm, and record discussions and meetings with supervisors using the *HDR Supervisor and Candidate Meeting Log*. Both parties must sign the meeting log.
- b. Inform the HDR candidate of satisfactory academic progress requirements and expectations for the award of the degree.
- c. Continuously monitor student work according to the work plan and emphasise the standard required for the award of the degree.
- d. The supervisor is to provide constructive comments to the candidate on their work and communicate to the candidate positively on any area of improvement needed due to inadequate progress demonstrated by the candidate.
- e. Prepare the candidates for progress reviews (candidature confirmation, mid candidature review, and completion seminar); and
- f. Assist and guide HDR candidates who are or may be at risk during the candidature period.
- g. Supervisors must meet with the candidate to discuss their academic progress and provide constructive feedback at least once in two weeks and keep a record of the discussions in the *HDR Supervisor & Candidate Meeting Log*.
- h. Support the candidates throughout their candidature to successful completion.

## 5.9 Candidature Conditions

Candidates must:

- a. Conform to enrollment requirements.
- b. Conform to the scholarship and/or sponsorship requirements.
- c. Attend induction programmes.
- d. Enroll in and register for coursework subjects as required.
- e. Undertake other preparatory courses where required.

Candidates and their supervisors must comply with the *HDR Supervisor and Student Code of Practice* and confirm:

- a. supervisory expectations and arrangements; and
- b. a schedule of supervisory meetings.

To maintain candidature, candidates must:

- a. maintain satisfactory academic progress.
- b. complete and attain satisfactory progress for all the milestones, including meeting the academic standards of the programme.
- c. agree to the University's terms and conditions of enrollment each year.

The HDRC may suspend, vary the terms of, or terminate a candidate's candidature for failure to comply with the:

- a. regulations, policies and processes of the University.
- b. conditions of admission, enrolment, milestone reviews, or examination in their programme of study.

HDRC may impose a range of conditions on candidates including:

- a. required levels of achievement and milestones;
- b. engagement with support services; and/or
- c. expected behaviour.

HDR Candidates and their supervisors are required to develop a research data plan based on *FNU Research Data Management Policy and Procedure for Staff, Adjuncts, HDR Candidates, and Visitors*.

#### **5.10 Deferral of Candidature**

Applicants may apply to defer the commencement of their programme prior to enrolment if approved by the HDRC.

The maximum period of deferral is 12 months; a lesser period may be granted.

Deferral is not automatically granted, and HDRC is not obliged to grant deferral. It will be based on a reason considered genuine by the HDRC.

When making decisions on requests to defer, factors that HDRC may consider:

- a. restrictions or conditions applying to any scholarship held by or offered to the candidate;
- b. course-specific criteria as documented in the course documents;
- c. regulatory requirements; and
- d. the capacity to provide supervision, and the availability of staff and resources required for the programme of study.

### 5.11 Leave

All HDR programmes are annual programmes.

Full-time HDR candidatures are entitled to a maximum of 20 working days annual leave per annum.

Part-time HDR candidatures are entitled to a maximum of 10 working days annual leave per annum.

Periods of leave may be granted to HDR candidates, however must not conflict with the candidature confirmation period, the expected programme duration for the relevant programme, the maximum submission date for examination, or any relevant programme requirements.

### 5.12 Study Away from the University

Candidates may spend time away from University for research-related activities; however, they must comply with *FNU Finance Policy*.

During time away from University, candidates are required to fulfil all the requirements that include milestone achievements and submission of work on the agreed timeframe or deadlines.

Any time spent away from the University will be factored into the candidates' candidature period.

The Research Office and HDRC will assign an external supervisor located near the candidate for periods of study away at another institute or obtain evidence of online meeting plans with supervisor/s.

### 5.13 Other Variations to Candidature

Candidates may apply to Research Office and HDRC to vary the condition of their candidature after commencement in their programme, including:

- a. change between full and part-time enrolment;
- b. change of supervisor;
- c. change of College;
- d. convert from one graduate research programme to another; or
- e. change of research project topic if required to after candidature confirmation.

Any change to the supervisory arrangement shall be done formally by applying to the Research Office for HDRC approval using the *Change of Supervisor Form*.

When making decisions on any variation to candidature applications, factors that the HDRC will consider include:

- a. programme-specific requirements;
- b. academic progress to date;
- c. supervisor availability;
- d. the candidate's prospects of success and capacity to complete on time;
- e. FNU resources and capacity;
- f. *HDR Supervisor and Student Code of Practice*;

- g. regulatory requirements; and/or
- h. compassionate or compelling circumstances.

The HDRC does not reserve the right to approve all requested changes; however, they will consider the matter on a case-by-case basis.

#### **5.14 Lapsed Candidature**

Lapsed candidature is a status intended to allow candidates to submit their thesis for examination following the expiration of their candidature entitlement and any approved extensions.

Lapsed candidature may be granted by HDRC:

- a. for masters candidates up to one calendar year; and
- b. for doctoral candidates up to two calendar years.

#### **5.15 Withdrawal from Programme**

A candidate may permanently withdraw from the programme they are enrolled in at any time however but not after they have:

- a. submitted a thesis or its creative equivalent for examination; or
- b. had their candidature terminated for unsatisfactory academic progress; or
- c. had their candidature terminated for misconduct; or
- d. had their candidature terminated for failure to submit for examination by the maximum submission date.

#### **5.16 Thesis**

The thesis must conform to the requirements of the *FNU Thesis Structure Guideline*.

Be the student's own work and include work done by the candidate during the candidature period.

Clearly demonstrate the contribution of knowledge in the discipline of the research study.

Afford evidence of originality by the:

- a. discovery of new knowledge; and
- b. exercise of independent critical ability.

Form a cohesive and unified whole.

Be of publishable quality with original work.

The structure and standard of the thesis are of international standard and acceptable to the discipline.

Is written in English.

The thesis must document, generally in the appendix:

- a. The animal and/or human ethics approval letter.
- b. Summaries of data sets/analysis.
- c. The nature of collaborations, or assistance, with the work described in the thesis, including:
  - any assistance provided during the research phase; and
  - any editorial assistance in finalising the thesis.

The thesis must contain a written component generally in the form of one or more critical hypotheses/propositions that investigated the subject of the thesis in the relevant body of knowledge.

The thesis may contain:

- a. artistic or creative works, software, computer code, or models which must be documented or recorded in a way sufficient for assessment;
- b. material that has been published during candidature with clearly stated references of the publications; and
- c. appendices.

An appendix section provides relevant supplementary materials that are related to the study but not evident in part or full in the main thesis. The material in appendices is assessable except where written entirely by authors other than the candidate. Appendices may include:

- a. data sets.
- b. software code.
- c. survey or interview tools used to gather research data.
- d. publications arising from the research but not directly.
- e. other material as deemed necessary by the student and the supervisor.

The length of the thesis at FNU are as follows:

- a. For master's degrees by research:
  - 40,000 to 60,000 words.
  - the word limit does not include appendices
- b. For doctoral degrees:
  - 60,000 to 100,000 words.
  - the word limit does not include appendices.

### **5.17 Language of the Thesis**

English is the medium of instruction at FNU, and all thesis must be written in English. Candidates intending to write a thesis in another language shall attain a formal approval from the HDRC prior to the commencement of HDR programme.

### **5.18 Editing of Theses by Third Parties**

The candidate's supervisors are to critique the draft thesis prior to approving its submission.

Students may use an editor to edit their written work. Students proposing to use an editor must use editors approved by Research Office and HDRC.

An editor may only be used for copy-editing and proofreading; and providing advice on:

- a. language, structure, style, syntax and grammar;
- b. presenting arguments, flow, the connection of sentences, paragraphs, and sections;
- c. text accuracy and layout consistency;
- d. voice and tone, clarity of expression;
- e. avoiding excessive information, repetition, ambiguity;
- f. checking of citations (intext/parenthetical) references sections, referencing style and quality;  
and
- g. completeness and consistency.

### **5.19 Eligibility to Submit for Examination**

Candidates are only eligible to submit their thesis and or creative equivalent for examination if they have been enrolled in the programme for the minimum period as follows:

- a. Masters Degree by Research - 12 months full-time equivalent; or
- b. Doctor of Philosophy Degree - 24 months full-time equivalent; and
- c. have satisfied all of the following requirements:
  - had their candidature confirmed;
  - satisfactorily met the requirements of mid candidature review and completion seminar;  
and
  - is enrolled and has approval from the supervisors, Research Office and HDRC to be placed under the examination.

HDR Candidates intending to submit their thesis before the minimum allowable time shall seek formal approval from the HDRC. This provision is only applicable in exceptional circumstances.

HDR Candidates are required to make declarations as per *FNU Thesis Structure Guidelines* before submission of thesis for examination.

A thesis or compilation may not be submitted for examination if:

- a. it is substantially similar to a thesis or work previously examined or assessed and rejected.
- b. it is substantially similar to a thesis or work upon which the candidate has qualified in whole or in part for any other qualification obtained at a tertiary educational institution anywhere in Fiji or any other part of the world.
- c. The candidate's candidature has been terminated at FNU or any other institution.

### **5.20 Notice of Intention to Submit**

A candidate shall formally make an application to submit a thesis for examination prior to the final submission date using the *Notification of Intention to Submit Form*.

The notice should be given at least three months prior to the intended submission date to allow sufficient time for:

- a. the appointment of examiners for the thesis.
- b. the organisation of oral examination; and
- c. the organisation of other examination requirements such as exhibitions or performances.

The notice of intention to submit must include a declaration by the student that they have complied with:

- a. Attainment of Ethics approvals (where required).
- b. Their research data management plan according to the *FNU Research Data Management Policy and Procedure for Staff, Adjuncts, HDR Candidates, and Visitors* and any relevant College discipline requirements.
- c. An agreement by the supervisors that the thesis is ready for examination.

The notice of intention to submit is sent by the principal supervisor to the Research Office for HDRC approval.

### 5.21 Submission Checks

HDR Supervisors take the responsibility to:

- a. review the format of the thesis according to *FNU Thesis Structure Guidelines*;
- b. apply similarity detection software (Turnitin at FNU); and
- c. conduct a data integrity check.

If for any reason, the thesis is not ready for examination, other than the research misconduct, the thesis shall be reviewed by a subcommittee of HDRC.

### 5.22 Thesis Submission

A HDR candidate shall submit the thesis for examination in soft copy as an electronic document via Moodle, via a similarity detecting software (Turnitin at FNU), and into the relevant Thesis Submission Portal Dropbox.

Additionally:

- a. A hard copy of the thesis may be accepted together with the soft copy if the examiners request a hard copy. In such cases, the research candidate is responsible for producing the hard copy to the Research Office for submission to the examiner/s.
- b. The Supervisors are responsible for conducting the submission check, including applying similarity detecting software and making other appropriate checks to all thesis before they are submitted for examination.
- c. Candidates will be required to submit an abstract of the study for the examiners to decide if they are prepared to examine the thesis.
- d. Candidates are required to submit a statement with the thesis through Thesis Consent Form, certifying their understanding that if their candidature is successful, an electronic copy of their thesis will be lodged with the University Library for external access unless embargoed by commercial in confidence restrictions.

All thesis submitted for examination will follow the *FNU Thesis Structure Guidelines*.

The HDRC may **decline to allow** a thesis to be submitted for examination if:

- a. The candidate has not satisfactorily completed the three milestones (candidature confirmation, mid candidature review, and completion seminar).
- b. The supervisor does not certify that it is ready for examination.
- c. The thesis does not meet the requirements of the standard of the award.

- d. The thesis exceeds the prescribed word limits without prior approval to do so.
- e. The student requests withdrawal from the examination and the HDRC determines there is good reason to do so.
- f. There is a finding of inappropriate academic practice, research misconduct or a breach of the:
  - *FNU Research Data Management Policy and Procedure for Staff, Adjuncts, HDR Candidates, and Visitors.*
  - *FNU Research Ethics Policy.*

When supervisors decline to sign on a thesis for examination, they must:

- a. report the circumstances and reasons for the decision to HDRC.
- b. document in writing:
  - the reasons for declining to allow the thesis to be examined;
  - any changes necessary to make the thesis acceptable for examination; and
  - any other actions required to be completed before the examination.

A candidate is allowed to submit his/her thesis without the examiners' signature/approval at their own risk.

The HDRC will decide whether the student is permitted to submit the thesis for examination without the supervisor's approval.

### **5.23 Nomination of Examiners**

The senior supervisor shall nominate two external examiners who meet the eligibility requirements to examine the thesis. The examiners must:

- a. agree to examine the thesis or compilation within 6 weeks of its receipt;
- b. declare that they have no real or perceived conflict of interest with the student, or the supervisors, or the institution, of a personal, professional, or commercial nature;
- c. agree to maintain confidentiality throughout the examination process; and
- d. where required, agree to sign a confidentiality agreement.

The nominations must:

- a. be submitted to the Chair of HDRC for HDRC approval;
- b. include the name, field of expertise and full contact details of the examiners;
- c. include the curriculum vitae of the proposed examiners;
- d. be endorsed by HDRC; and
- e. not be disclosed to the candidate or any other person not involved in the examination.

The Chair of HDRC may reject nominations that do not meet the requirements for examiners or require further evidence of the suitability of the nominees.



#### 5.24 Examiners

Examiners must:

- a. be of good international standing in the research topic of the thesis or compilation;
- b. be qualified to at least the same level as the award they are examining or have equivalent research experience; and
- c. be from different external institutions with at least one examiner to have PhD examination experience.

A person is ineligible to serve as an examiner if they:

- a. have a pending appointment with, are currently employed, or have been employed by FNU in any capacity within the last five years;
- b. have a pending appointment with, currently hold, or have within the past five years held an honorary position with the FNU;
- c. are a supervisor or advisory committee member of the candidate under examination;
- d. have had direct involvement with the thesis through reading drafts or discussing the research;
- e. have been a collaborator or co-author with the supervisor/s or candidate within the last five years; or
- f. have a real or perceived conflict of interest with the candidate, the supervisors or the institution which is of a personal, professional or commercial nature.

Failure by the supervisors or College ADR/Dean to disclose a conflict of interest or cases where a conflict of interest might reasonably be perceived to exist may be considered grounds for research misconduct, as outlined in the *FNU HR Policy*.

#### 5.25 Replacement of Examiners

The Chair of the HDRC may excuse any examiner and/or annul their report if:

- a. the examiner does not fulfil the requirements of the thesis examination.
- b. fails to conduct the examination and submit an examination report in a timely manner.
- c. makes contact with the candidate or their supervisors during the examination period.
- d. a conflict of interest is discovered during or after the examination; and/or
- e. they have reason to believe that the examination has not been properly conducted.

If an examiner is to be replaced, the Chair of HDRC must:

- a. inform the existing examiner of the perceived changes with the justification that why his/her services are no longer required; and
- b. approve a new examiner and inform them of the HDR examination process.

Upon commissioning of the new examiner, the previous examiner whose services have been terminated and any report on thesis examination shall be made null and void and shall not be used to determine the award.

#### 5.26 Thesis Examination

The examination is an assessment of the total thesis presented.

The examination process proceeds on the basis that the thesis meets the academic requirements and makes an original contribution to knowledge.

The outcome of the examination is an academic decision by the HDRC based on a body of evidence that includes mandatory items:

- a. the thesis.
- b. examiners' reports.
- c. outcome of the oral examination.
- d. Chair of oral examination's report based on the oral examination.

### **5.27 Examiners Report**

Within six weeks of the receipt of the thesis, each examiner must:

- a. complete the examination; and
- b. submit a report to the Research Office for HDRC approval.

Each examiner must submit an independent report, which will remain confidential until all reports have been received.

Examiners' reports must be in English using the *Doctor of Philosophy & Masters by Research Thesis Examination Form*.

Examiners' reports must state whether, in the opinion of the examiner, the thesis fulfils the requirements of a thesis based on its level specified in the *Doctor of Philosophy & Masters by Research Thesis Examination Form*.

The examiner must include in the report suggested oral exam questions.

### **5.28 Monitoring Examiners' Reports**

When an examiner submits a report, the Research Office will:

- a. acknowledge receipt of the report; and
- b. arrange for payment of the appropriate honorarium to the external examiners.

Research Office reserves the right to;

- a. contact and inform the examiner on the conditions of examination and request for the examination report giving an additional two weeks for submission;
- b. contact the examiner at the end of the eighth week requesting for the report and giving additional two weeks to comply with the submission requirements; and
- c. contact and inform the examiner at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> week, notifying the examiner that he/she has failed to meet the deadlines and the HDRC has terminated the examination contract, the examiner will not be eligible for any payment, and a replacement examiner will be appointed.

### **5.29 Examiner-As-Assessor**

An examiner-as-assessor must complete an initial independent examination of the thesis based on the same criteria as all examiners. If a thesis contains a creative or artistic component, this will be provided as either a documentary recording or as an exhibition, installation, or performance.

The examiner-as-assessor must provide a written report containing:

- a. an examiner's report, including a recommendation about the outcome of the examination; and
- b. questions for the oral examination.

HDRC will consider the report of the examiner-as-assessor and provide a further report, including a recommendation regarding the outcome of the examination for additional work, re-examination or the candidate to proceed to the oral examination.

Once the candidate has satisfactorily completed the thesis examination and oral examination, HDRC will recommend to the Senate approval of the final examination outcome.

The Senate will then approve the award of the degree to the candidate.

### **5.30 Communication During the Examination Process**

#### **5.30.1 Between Examiners**

- a. 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.
- b. 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.

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

- a. 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.*

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

- a. Research Office 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.
- b. The Research Office will inform the examiners of the outcome of the examination at the conclusion of the examination.

- c. 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 Research Office may provide the student with notice of the completion of each of the following stages of the examination process:

- a. thesis submitted for examination;
- b. thesis sent to examiners and reports pending;
- c. all examiners have submitted reports;
- d. the relevant committee is considering recommendations from examiners;
- e. notification of the result of the examination;
- f. awaiting comment from the student regarding the result of the examination;
- g. student to fulfil the conditions of the award, including thesis repository in the University library;
- h. student to re-enroll if required for a revise and resubmit outcome;
- i. outcome of the oral examination; and
- j. conditions of award fulfilled and degree may be awarded

### **5.31 Examination of a Thesis Containing Creative or Artistic Components**

All thesis that has a creative component shall be examined together with the written component as an integrated whole.

The creative work may be presented in the context of an exhibition, installation, performance or any other context.

Where the creative component is an exhibition or installation, the documentary record may take the form of a catalogue with images of sufficient quality for examination.

The student is responsible for creating the documentary record of the creative work.

The Research Office and the HDRC will decide whether the examination of creative work should include:

- a. a performance, installation or exhibition; and
- b. an oral examination.

Where the examination of a creative work component includes performance, installation or exhibition, the written component of the thesis should be provided to the examiners prior to the examination of the creative component.

Where there is no performance, installation or exhibition, or where an examiner cannot attend in person, the examiner(s) shall conduct their examination using the documentary record of the creative work.

Except as otherwise stated in faculty resolutions, the examination of a thesis with a creative component must comply with procedures, including (where appropriate) those relating to oral examinations.

The outcomes of the examination for a thesis submitted with a creative or artistic component must relate to the whole thesis and the oral examination, including the artistic or creative work.

### **5.32 Thesis Examination Result**

A result cannot be confirmed until two valid examiners' reports have been received and approved by the HDRC for the candidate to proceed to an oral examination.

For minor corrections, if a candidate does not return their corrected thesis or compilation within three months of the required date following the result, they are awarded a fail result.

For major corrections, a candidate must submit the revised thesis for the second examination within 12 months for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree and within 6 months for a Masters by Research Degree.

In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of HDRC may grant a further extension.

If a candidate is required to revise and resubmit their thesis, they have one opportunity to ensure the thesis meets the requirements for the award of the degree on the second examination.

If a candidate does not submit their revised thesis by the expiration of the final deadline detailed, they are awarded a fail result.

The result of the second examination of any thesis is final.

### **5.33 The Outcome of the Thesis Examination**

The outcome of the examination will be decided for Masters by Research and PhD as determined by the HDRC on completion of both thesis examination and oral examination.

The outcome of the examination must be one of the following:

- a. A clear pass: the candidate proceeds to the oral examination.
- b. A pass with minor changes: the candidate proceeds to the oral examination after satisfactorily completing the minor changes.
- c. A pass with substantial change: the option is provided for the student to revise and resubmit the thesis. It will be decided by HDRC based on examiners' reports for a second examination or for supervisor and HDRC approval. Once the candidate satisfactorily completes the changes approved by HDRC, the candidate can proceed to the oral examination.
- d. A pass with a major rewrite and resubmit for examination: the option is provided for the student to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination. The candidate will proceed to oral examination only when HDRC approves the second examination report.
- e. A fail may result in the option to award another degree on the recommendation of HDRC. Requirements for alternative degrees will apply.
- f. A failed thesis: does not merit any qualification.

#### **5.34 Thesis Examination Confidentiality**

Potential examiners are only given the name of the candidate, the programme type, the title, and an executive summary of the thesis or compilation.

Candidates must not be told the identity of any examiners nominated or appointed until the oral examination.

The nominations of examiners are to follow the *FNU Nomination of Examiners Guidelines*.

An examiner must not be told the identity of the other examiners, until the oral examination date is confirmed.

A candidate and their supervisors may request that a thesis be examined under a confidentiality agreement if the thesis contains material that is commercial-in-confidence, may give rise to a patent, or maybe legally or culturally sensitive.

If the Chair of HDRC agrees that the thesis or compilation should be examined under a confidentiality agreement, the thesis or compilation must not be sent to an examiner until they have signed a confidentiality agreement.

#### **5.35 Thesis Modifications**

No part of the thesis or compilation may be modified once a 'pass' result has been awarded.

If serious errors are discovered subsequent to the award of the degree, the student or person discovering the error should advise the Research Office.

The Research Office in consultation with the HDRC must determine whether a full retraction, partial redaction or corrigendum is required and advise the University Library accordingly.

#### **5.36 Restricted Access to a Thesis**

The Research Office, in consultation with HDRC, may direct that any thesis or work be withheld from access, or placed on restricted access for a specified time.

#### **5.37 Conduct of Oral Examinations**

All HDR examinations will require an oral examination.

An oral exam will proceed on the recommendation of HDRC, based on the thesis examination outcome as outlined in the *FNU External Examiner Guidelines for Research Degrees*.

All parties to an oral examination must participate in person, or in exceptional circumstances via Zoom or teleconference. In-person participation is preferable in all cases.

The student may elect to have a supervisor attend the oral examination for moral support. In this case, the supervisor is to attend for moral support only and is not allowed to have a say at the oral exam.

The Research Office will set the date of the oral examination.

Each examiner will be sent the thesis or, where the thesis includes a live performance, exhibition or installation that is yet to occur, the written component of the thesis as soon as approval to proceed to oral examination is obtained from HDRC.

An oral examination of a thesis will:

- a. test the comprehension of the student of the field of the study and allow the examiners to clarify any issues that may not be clearly stated in the thesis.
- b. Ensure the work included in the thesis is the student's work.
- c. Ensure the student is able to justify each component of work included in the thesis.
- d. Assess the contribution made by the student based on the evidence presented in the thesis.
- e. Ensure the student is well versed with the extant literature on the topic of the thesis and the contribution their thesis makes to the extant body of knowledge.

An oral examination of creative or artistic work may include:

- a. contextualisation of the student's work, where the student presents the development of the thesis to the examination panel;
- b. discussion of the creative or artistic component of the thesis at the site of the exhibition with the student; or
- c. discussion of the written component and related matters with the student.

At the close of the oral examination, the independent Chair of examination and examiners must meet in private to prepare a report and recommendation of the examination outcome.

- a. Only the Chair of examination and examiners may attend this meeting.
- b. The final report must be prepared by the Chair of the examination incorporating the examiners' reports of the oral exam.

The oral examination report together with the examiners' report will be considered together and in the same manner as the thesis examination reports by the HDRC.

The examiners' final reports and the Chair of the examination's report must be considered in the same manner the thesis reports are considered by HDRC.

### **5.38 Role of the Independent Chair of Examination in an Oral Examination**

The Chair of the oral examination is a representative of the HDRC or a senior Professor at FNU and has the following responsibilities:

- a. to ensure that the examiners and student are informed of the arrangements for holding the oral examination;
- b. to discuss with the student, prior to the examination, the nature of an oral examination, noting that students are expected to prepare their responses;
- c. to assure the student that the examination is intended to be constructive and helpful;
- d. to explain the proceedings to the examiners and the student;
- e. to chair the oral examination of the thesis, and any subsequent meeting of examiners;
- f. to provide a report to HDRC; and
- g. to inform the student about the examiners' recommendations.

**5.39 Re-Enrolment for Re-Examination**

If the examination outcome is “A pass with a major rewrite and resubmit for examination,” the candidate must re-enroll as a research student of the University during any resubmission period and pay the appropriate fee.

**5.40 Award**

When the decision to award the degree has been made, the HDRC and Senate may certify that the student is eligible to graduate subject to the student:

- a. fulfilling all conditions of award to the satisfaction of HDRC and Senate; and
- b. lodging a final digital copy of the final thesis with the University Library via Research Office.

**5.41 Posthumous Award**

A research degree may be granted posthumously based on a submission, completed by a candidate, which is ready for examination.

**5.42 Lodgment of Theses in the University Library**

The final copy of the thesis lodged in the University library must be in electronic format except as permitted by the HDRC.

The copy must be complete, including:

- a. any appendices submitted for examination;
- b. any published material included in the thesis;
- c. documentary recording of any artistic or creative works; and
- d. any corrections required by the University addressed to the satisfaction of the Chair of the HDRC.

The student must provide the title and an abstract of the thesis at the time of lodgment to be included in the Library catalogue meta-data.

The student may specify at the time of lodgment of any confidentiality requirements for their thesis not to be made available for open access. Generally, all thesis will be lodged in the library for open access.

Where a student has been permitted to include an appendix of material that is not to be made available for public inspection, the appendix must be lodged separately to the remainder of the thesis in a form prescribed by the University Librarian.

The Library catalogue meta-data, including the student's name, thesis title, and abstract, will be publicly available.

A student may also opt to publish sections of their thesis as part of an open research collection.

For example, this may be used:

- a. where copyright restrictions on published material prevent the open access publication of the whole thesis; or
- b. where the student opts to publish the written component of the thesis but not creative work.



The final copy of the thesis lodged in the library cannot be altered.

The Research Office and HDRC may approve that an errata notice is appended to a lodged thesis. The errata notice must:

- a. be clearly distinguishable from the thesis as originally lodged;
- b. be labeled as "errata notice";
- c. identify the author of the notice;
- d. clearly state the date of the notice; and
- e. list each erratum separately with a page reference and in page reference order.

#### **5.43 Compliance with University Regulations Regarding the Examination Process**

In any instance where HDRC is made aware of a failure to comply with the regulations regarding the examination process, it may, exceptionally, declare the appointment of the examiners, the submission or the examination null and void.

Any action that a candidate may take in order to gain an unfair advantage in the examination process (including plagiarism) will constitute a breach of regulations.

In the case of any breach of regulations, the HDRC may refuse to award a degree or, if it has already been awarded, may withdraw the degree.

#### **5.44 Appeals of Examination Decisions**

Following the completion of the examination process, candidates have the right to request a review of the decisions taken by the HDRC upon the recommendations made by the examiners. A request for a review of a particular decision may be based on one or a combination of any of the following grounds:

- a. That there are exceptional circumstances affecting the candidate's performance which could not for a valid reason be brought to the attention of examiners or the HDRC at or before the oral examination or were not known to the candidate prior to making his or her submission for examination.
- b. That there is evidence of procedural irregularity in the conduct of the examination (including administrative error) of such nature as to cause doubt as to whether the result might have been different had there not been such irregularity.
- c. That there is evidence of unfair or improper conduct or assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners or unfair or improper conduct on the part of any independent chair at the oral examination.

Candidates cannot challenge the **academic judgment** of the examiners or HDRC.

### **6.0 HDR Procedure**

#### **6.1 Supervisor Availability**

All admissions will depend on the availability of supervisors.

During candidature, if a supervisor ceases employment and or is unable to supervise for a valid reason, the Research Office and College Dean shall make all arrangements for a new supervisor to be appointed.

## 6.2 Role of the Supervisor

Supervisors and students have specific roles and responsibilities to perform from the beginning to the end of candidature. Supervisors and HDR candidates are required to read through the *FNU Supervisor and Student Code of Practice* and conform to the code of practice.

## 6.3 Progress Reviews

The supervisors shall prepare the candidates for the milestone assessment/review based on the following guidelines. Assessment/review panel members should also familiarise themselves with the milestone guidelines.

### Doctor of Philosophy Candidates

Progress reviews for all **PhD** candidates will require successful completion of two preparatory research courses as pre-requisites for candidature confirmation unless exempted due to prior learning. The two courses to complete will be decided by the candidate and the senior supervisor based on the candidate's prior learning and skills required to undertake research.

For progress reviews, each full-time candidate has to satisfy the requirements for:

- a. Candidature confirmation within 10 months of candidature;
- b. Mid candidature review within 20 months of candidature; and
- c. Completion seminar within 30 months of candidature, prior to submission of the thesis at the end of 36 months.

### Masters by Research Candidates

Progress reviews for **Masters by Research** candidates will require successful completion of two preparatory research courses for candidature confirmation unless exempted due to prior learning. The two courses to complete will be decided by the candidate and the senior supervisor based on the candidate's prior learning and skills required to undertake research.

For progress reviews, each full-time candidate has to satisfy the requirements for:

- a. Candidature confirmation within 8 months of candidature.
- b. Completion seminar within 18 months of candidature prior to the submission of the thesis at the end of 24 months of candidature.

## 6.4 Candidature Confirmation

The candidate will submit a research proposal and a progress report to the panel. A candidate who does not comply with this requirement will normally be required to withdraw their enrolment from the programme.

The proposed research proposal will clearly explicate:

- a. Project scope, research challenge/problem, and nature of innovation;
- b. Research framework/design;
- c. Key activities and timelines; and
- d. Expected research results and outcomes.

The research report will entail a literature review and analysis and any chapters completed in no more than 6,000 words at the time of candidature confirmation for PhD candidates and in no more than 5,000 words for Masters Degree by Research candidates.

HDR candidates are required to submit their proposals and reports to the panel via Research Office at least two weeks before the presentation date.

At the presentation, candidates will make a case for doing the research and justify the research design to be the best approach to address the research problem.

The candidature confirmation panel will determine one of the following outcomes:

- a. That the candidate's programme of work (research proposal) is approved, in which case the candidate is confirmed and their proposal is registered with the Research Office, and the candidate progresses to the next stage of their research.
- b. That the candidate's programme of work (research proposal) is approved, subject to completing amendments to the research proposal and progression report within 2 weeks of the assessment. Written guidance is to be given to the candidate with the report compiled by the Chair of the panel, Associate Dean Research of the respective College or their representative and Director, Research. Once the research proposal is approved, it will be registered with the Research Office, and the candidate will progress to the next stage of their research.
- c. That the candidate's proposal and research report is not approved, in which case the candidate will be given a second chance within two weeks to improve and present. If the candidate does not get through a second time, their enrolment under this schedule will be withdrawn.

Candidature confirmation for PhD programme will entail a presentation to a panel of three members, comprised of:

- 1st Chair: School or discipline HDR Convenor/Head of Discipline with PhD qualification.
- 2nd member: Member of the discipline closely aligned with the research area with PhD qualification.
- 3rd member: Member from another discipline or school with related research expertise with PhD qualification.

Candidature Confirmation for Masters by Research programme will entail a presentation to a panel of three members:

- 1st Chair: School or discipline HDR Convenor/Head of Discipline with Masters by Research/PhD qualification.
- 2nd member: Member of the discipline closely aligned with the research area with Masters by Research/PhD qualification.
- 3rd member: Member from another discipline or school with related research expertise with Masters by Research/PhD qualification.

All panel members will be independent of the supervisory team, and will be approved by the respective College Dean.

The candidature confirmation presentation will be for a minimum of 20 minutes, with additional time for questions from the review panel members.

The review panel will provide feedback to the candidate on the research proposal both verbally and in writing on the future direction of the candidate's research. This will be recorded on the Candidature Confirmation Assessment Form.

The panel members and supervisors will familiarise themselves with the Candidature Confirmation Procedure and requirements.

#### **Candidature Confirmation Assessment Process:**

- a. Candidate loads his/her PowerPoint slides (2 minutes).
- b. Panel Members and the audience take their positions.
- c. The candidate presents his/her proposal to the panel (20 minutes).
- d. Panel members take notes using the Candidature Confirmation Assessment Form.
- e. Panel asks questions to the candidate (20 to 25 minutes).
- f. Two questions from the audience to the candidate.
- g. The candidate and audience leave the room for the panel members to discuss (10 minutes).
- h. The panel members invite the candidate and provide positive yet constructive feedback to the candidate [This is a critical stage of candidature; therefore, the panel must help the candidate improve the proposal to ensure their literature analysis, citations, research questions, the significance of the research, theories used to underpin the research, research process, research design, amount of data required to generate new knowledge in the discipline, and time table are all correct].
- i. The candidate leaves.
- j. The College Associate Dean Research and Director Research collect the assessment forms from the panel members to write a report to the candidate (within 7 days) submitted to the Research Office for HDRC approval and to inform the candidate of the outcome. Research Office will record the outcome in the HDR Register held at the Research Office.

#### **6.5 Mid Candidature Review (PhD candidates only)**

A candidate is required to submit their progress report, draft chapters and publications (if any) to the principal supervisor within 18 months from the date of enrolment.

The Principal Supervisor will ensure that the mid candidature review committee is appointed within 20 months from the date of enrolment for full-time candidates.

The mid-candidature review will be assessed by panels of three people comprised of:

- 1st Chair: School or discipline HDR Convenor/Head of Discipline with PhD qualification.
- 2nd member: Member of the discipline closely aligned with the research area with PhD qualification.
- 3rd member: Member from another discipline or school with related research expertise with PhD qualification.

All panel members will be independent of the supervisory team.

The candidate is required to submit for assessment a progress report in no more than 6,000 words discussing the work completed to date, including publications (if any), ethics approval and data collected to the panel, and make a presentation discussing their work. The presentation will take place no more than 3 weeks after the candidate's submission of the work.

The mid-candidature confirmation presentation will be for 30 minutes followed by questions from the review panel members.

The panel will assess the progress achieved by the candidate, which should demonstrate achievement commensurate with the period of enrolment with the criteria for the award.

The panel will determine one of the following outcomes of the progress assessment:

- a. That the candidate progresses to the next stage of their research programme.
- b. That the candidate progresses to the next stage of their research programme subject to completing amendments to the progress report within 2 weeks of the date of the presentation. Written guidance is to be given to the candidate with the report compiled by the ADR and Director Research and submitted to the Research Office for HDRC approval and for recording.
- c. That the candidate's work and research report is not approved, in which case the candidate will be given a second chance within two weeks to improve and present to the same panel as far as possible. If the candidate does not get through a second time, a remedial programme may be recommended by HDRC to both the candidate and their supervisors.

The review panel will provide feedback at the end of the presentation and discussion to the candidate on the research work both verbally and in writing on the future direction of the candidate's research. This will be recorded *on the Mid-Candidature Review Form* and filed with the Research Office for approval by HDRC.

#### **Mid Candidature Review Process:**

- a. Candidate loads his/her PowerPoint slides (2 minutes).
- b. Panel Members and the audience take their positions.
- c. The candidate presents his/her progress report to the panel (30 minutes).
- d. Panel members take notes using the Mid Candidature Review Form.
- e. Panel asks questions to the candidate (25 to 30 minutes).
- f. Two questions from the audience to the candidate.
- g. The candidate and audience leave the room for the panel members to discuss (15 minutes).
- h. The panel members invite the candidate and provide positive yet constructive feedback to the candidate on the progress made. The review should specifically focus on the evidence of ethics approval (if applicable), publication/s (if any), draft chapters, evidence of data collection and analysis, candidate's ability to address findings logically and critically, arguments/findings supported with literature and previous research if any, a summary of the research findings and its relevance to the significance of the study, the contribution of the findings to the research domain, justification for the next stage of research and any other material relevant to the study outcomes. The panel members should also pay attention to the citations, research questions, significance of the research, theories used to underpin the

research, research process, research design, and the amount of data collected to generate new knowledge in the discipline.

- i. The candidate leaves.
- j. That panel members invite the HDR candidate and their supervisors and provide feedback to the candidate of their assessment.
- k. The College Associate Dean Research and Director Research collect the assessment forms from the panel members to write a report to the candidate (within 7 days) submitted to the Research Office for HDRC approval and sending out a formal letter and a summary of feedback to the candidate and for recording in the HDR Register held at Research Office.

## 6.6 Completion Seminar

Completion Seminar for PhD programme will entail a presentation to a panel of four members, with PhD qualification. Two members will be from the candidate's research area, one member from another discipline at FNU and one external member from another university (USP or UniFiji). The panel members will be approved by HDRC.

Completion Seminar for Masters by Research programme will entail a presentation to a panel of four members, with PhD or masters by research qualification. Two members will be from the candidate's research area, one member from another discipline at FNU and one external member from another university (USP or UniFiji). The panel members will be approved by HDRC

A candidate is required to submit their progress report, evidence of work completed to date including completion of all data collection and analysis, draft chapters and publications (if any) to the principal supervisor within 28 months for full-time PhD and 18 months for full-time Masters by Research candidates from the date of enrolment. The progress report will be no more than 6,000 words for PhD and 5000 words for Masters by Research programme, excluding appendices, draft chapters, publications and other outcomes.

The Principal Supervisor will ensure that the completion seminar review committee is appointed within 30 months for full-time PhD candidates and 18 months for full-time Masters by Research programme from the date of enrolment.

The Chair of the review panel will be an experienced, research-active senior academic from Fiji National University, while the other two members will be academics with knowledge in the area of the candidate's research or methodology. The fourth member will be an external academic from another university. All panel members will be independent of the supervisory team.

The completion seminar presentation will be for a minimum of 60 minutes, with additional time for questions from the panel members

The panel will assess the progress achieved by the candidate, which should demonstrate achievement commensurate with the period of enrolment with the criteria for the award.

The panel will determine one of the following outcomes of the progress assessment:

- a. That the candidate progresses to the next stage of finalising their thesis.
- b. That the candidate progresses to the next stage of their research programme subject to completing amendments suggested by the panel members within 2 weeks of the date of the presentation. Verbal feedback is to be provided to the candidate by the panel at the end of the presentation. Written feedback is to be given to the candidate with the report compiled by the College ADR and Director Research within two weeks of the review for HDRC approval and for recording at the Research Office.
- c. That the candidate collects more data for the level of study.  
Note: The Masters by Research candidate at this stage may request the panel to upgrade to PhD with full justification of the next stage of research that will extend the current work to the level of a PhD.

The review panel will provide feedback at the end of the presentation and discussion to the candidate on the research work both verbally and in writing on the future direction of the candidate's research. This will be recorded on the *Completion Seminar Review Form* and filed with the Research Office for approval by HDRC. The ADR of the College and the Research Director will formulate a formal response to the candidate.

#### **Completion Seminar Review Process:**

- a. Candidate loads his/her PowerPoint slides (2 minutes).
- b. Panel Members and the audience take their positions.
- c. The candidate presents his/her progress report to the panel (60 minutes).
- d. Panel members take notes using the Completion Seminar Review Form.
- e. Panel members ask questions to the candidate (45 to 60 minutes).
- f. The candidate leaves the room for the panel members to discuss (40 to 45 minutes).
- g. The panel members invite the candidate and provide positive yet constructive feedback to the candidate on the progress made. The review should specifically focus on the completion of a full set of data collected, analysed and related to the aim and objectives of the study, data analysed and presented using figures, graphs, and other illustrative techniques to augment text data, demonstrate skills in interpreting the findings and relating to the hypothesis/ research questions, addresses the findings by critical and logical discussion/ arguments with the support of literature/ previous research, provides the summary of the research findings, addresses the strengths and limitations of the study, justifies the similarities and differences of the findings in relation to previous research and literature, addresses the contribution of the study to the discipline of a study highlighting findings that are new and unique; and provides the whole list of citations compiled in EndNote. The panel members will also take into account publications from the research project to date.
- h. The candidate leaves.
- i. The College Associate Dean Research and Director Research collect the assessment forms from the panel members to write a report to the candidate (within 7 days) submitted to the Research Office for HDRC approval, for sending out a formal letter and a summary of feedback to the candidate, and for recording in the HDR Register held at the Research Office.

### **6.7 Changes to Candidature**

Changes to a candidate's enrolment must be approved by the Research Office and HDRC.

### **6.8 Leave Entitlements and Candidature**

Supervisors must assess and approve applications for leave and inform Research Office for endorsement by HDRC.

For all categories of approved leave other than recreational leave:

- a. enrolment in the course is suspended for the duration of the leave;
- b. time spent on leave is not included in the enrolment entitlement;
- c. candidates are provided with access to University services such as a student email account, library, and student advising system; and
- d. progression milestone dates are adjusted to reflect periods of leave.

### **6.9 Lapsed Candidature Applications and Approvals**

Applications to lapsed candidature must be approved by HDRC.

Approval to lapse may only be granted if, in the opinion of the candidate's supervisor the:

- a. candidate has demonstrated sufficient understanding of the research topic to make completion likely;
- b. candidate has provided a credible plan for completion; and
- c. candidate's personal circumstances are such that completion is likely.

If a candidate's application is rejected, the candidate is regarded as making unsatisfactory academic progress, and the HDRC will issue a formal decision on unsatisfactory progress.

HDRC may only approve an extension to lapse, up to two calendar years in total for a PhD candidate and one calendar year in total for a Masters by Research candidate, where compelling personal, medical or compassionate grounds exist.

If a candidate does not submit their thesis or its creative equivalent within the agreed period of lapse, their enrolment is terminated.

### **6.10 Late Submission Applications and Approvals**

Applications for late submission are assessed by the senior supervisor and approved by HDRC.

HDRC may deliberate on late submissions based on the senior supervisors' recommendations and may grant approval if:

- a. The candidate meets the HDR requirements, demonstrates sufficient understanding of the research topic and submits a work plan for completion within the specified timeframe.

HDRC shall consider the applications for late submission on the following circumstances:

- a. compelling and serious research-related reasons beyond the candidates' control; or
- b. compelling or unexpected, personal or medical reasons which have arisen during the candidature period.



Candidates who are permitted to make a late submission will not be enrolled and will not have an enrolled status in the student management system.

If candidates are granted late submission and require access to the University facilities for research-related reasons, such as the library, laboratory or studio space, they must be enrolled for administrative purposes. An identifying status will be assigned to these candidates in the student management system.

If a candidate does not submit their thesis or its creative equivalent by the maximum submission date granted by HDRC under this provision, their progress is unsatisfactory, and their enrolment may be terminated.

#### **6.11 Thesis or Compilation Submission**

Candidates must submit their thesis or compilation following the *FNU Thesis Structure Guideline*.

#### **6.12 Qualifications of Examiners**

Nominated examiners must be approved by the HDRC based on the *FNU Nomination of Examiners Guideline* and Forms.

The HDRC should take all reasonable steps to ensure that examiners are:

- a. free from bias for or against the student or the supervisor; and
- b. free from actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

A person must not be an examiner if they:

- a. have been involved in the student's research;
- b. are a co-author on any part of the work;
- c. have a past or current close personal relationship with the student or supervisor;
- d. have had substantial contact with the student or supervisor in any other circumstances which might jeopardise the independence, or the perceived independence, of the examination;
- e. have been a research student of the supervisor within the last five years;
- f. have published with any of the supervisors in the last five years; or
- g. have supervised the student at any time.

Former research students of the supervisor must not be appointed as examiners for at least five years after graduation, except with the specific approval of the HDRC and in exceptional circumstances.

#### **6.13 Approving Examiners**

The senior supervisor will nominate examiners to HDRC via Research Office at least two months prior to the intended submission date of the thesis using the *FNU Nomination of Examiners Form*.

The supervisor should consult potential examiners prior to their nomination to ensure that they are willing and able to act as examiners within the timeframe expected, by submitting to them an executive summary of the thesis written by the candidate.

The supervisor must:

- a. nominate examiners using the *FNU Nomination of Examiners Form*; and
- b. submit the nomination form to Research Office for HDRC approval.

While nominating the examiners to HDRC, supervisors shall consider the following:

- a. whether they are currently research active and affiliated to a university; their previous experience as an examiner;
- b. their relevant expertise;
- c. whether they have agreed to act as an examiner;
- d. whether they are willing to conduct an oral examination;
- e. whether they are willing to examine the thesis in electronic form;
- f. that they will submit their report in English; and
- g. a conflict of interest declaration signed by the supervisor.

If the student does not submit the thesis for examination within three months following the approval of examiners, the Research Office must:

- a. request a revised submission date from the student and the supervisor; and
- b. write to each examiner:
  - to inform them of the delay; and
  - ask if they are still willing to conduct the examination of the thesis at a future date.

#### **6.14 Commissioning of Examiners**

The Research Office will commission approved examiners by sending each examiner:

- a. a copy of the thesis in the requested format;
- b. a copy of the examiner's report form and examination guidelines;
- c. the resolutions relating to the degree;
- d. proposed arrangements for an oral examination;
- e. proposed arrangements for the examination of the creative or artistic component, if applicable;
- f. any specific conditions relating to the examination process; and
- g. the name and contact details of the relevant Research Office staff member for communication regarding the process.

At least two examiners approved by the HDRC will be commissioned.

Approved examiners who are not initially commissioned may be used at a later stage as a replacement or additional examiners.

At the time of commissioning, the Research Office must ensure that examiners are informed that:

- a. the contents of the thesis, including any intellectual property rights contained in the thesis, remain strictly confidential;
- b. the thesis can only be used for the purposes of performing the examination;
- c. their names may be released to the student after the examination; and
- d. their reports will be released to the student after the examination if they allow it.

### 6.15 Approving and Commissioning of Additional Examiners

Additional approved examiners may be commissioned to examine a thesis if:

- a. an original examiner is unable to examine subsequent to appointment; or
- b. an original examiner does not complete their examination within the required time frame; or as required by the HDR Committee.
- c. in the case of two conflicting examination reports.

### 6.16 Examination Process

The Research Office is responsible for administering the examination of all Masters by Research and Doctoral Degrees under the direction of the Chair of HDRC.

Each oral examination is overseen by a chair who is a member of HDRC and/or a Senior Professor at FNU.

### 6.17 Examination Criteria

Examiners must consider the thesis or compilation solely on its merits and must consider whether it meets the following criteria:

- a. the candidate has demonstrated sufficient familiarity with, and understanding, and critical appraisal of, the relevant literature;
- b. it is a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of the topic;
- c. methods and techniques adopted are appropriate, properly justified and applied;
- d. results are suitably set out and accompanied by adequate exposition and interpretation;
- e. conclusions and implications are appropriately developed and clearly linked to the nature and content of the research framework and findings;
- f. research questions have been tested or explored according to disciplinary norms;
- g. the literary quality and general presentation of the thesis is of an appropriately high standard; and
- h. the thesis or compilation as a whole constitutes an original contribution to knowledge in its subject area.

For a thesis containing creative works or compilations containing creative works, the examiners must also consider whether they meet the following criteria:

- a. demonstration of a professional level of familiarity with and understanding of contemporary work in the field;
- b. demonstration of a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of the art form and creative content;
- c. the methods and techniques applied in the execution of the work are appropriate to the subject matter and are original and/or aesthetically effective;
- d. it is presented in a sufficiently professional manner;
- e. demonstration of a sufficiently high standard of literary, visual, digital, musical or performance literacy and quality;
- f. the research questions have been identified and tested through creative work;
- g. documentation of the work, (including catalogue/programme material where appropriate) is sufficiently thorough and is of a standard that ensures the work provides a reference for subsequent researchers;

- h. the creative work and the dissertation together constitute an original substantive contribution to knowledge in the subject area; and,
- i. the interface between the creative work and the dissertation is appropriate and substantiated.

#### **6.18 Examination of the Thesis or Compilation**

Each examiner independently examines the thesis or its creative equivalent against the criteria and makes a report in writing, using the *Doctor of Philosophy/Masters by Research Thesis Examination Form*.

If an examiner fails to return a completed report within 10 weeks of dispatch of the thesis/materials for examination, they may be replaced, and a new examiner appointed.

Where a replacement examiner has been appointed, any report subsequently received from the examiner who has been replaced is not considered.

#### **6.19 Examination of a Performance or Exhibition of Creative Works**

A HDRC member and at least two further examiners with expertise in the field must attend either a private or public performance or exhibition of the creative work.

If the performance or exhibition is held prior to the submission of the thesis, the candidate must submit an extended abstract of the thesis no less than one week before the performance or exhibition. The extended abstract should be between 1000 – 3000 words for a Doctoral Degree (Research), and 500 - 1500 words for a Masters Degree by Research.

The HDRC will schedule and select the venue of a private performance or exhibition, to maintain the confidentiality of the examination.

The HDRC may recommend that the examiners attend a public performance or exhibition at different times to maintain confidentiality.

#### **6.20 The Outcome of Thesis Examination: Award with a Qualification or with Corrections**

If the outcome of an examination is that the degree is awarded the qualification, the HDRC must:

- a. set the date by which the final version of the thesis must be lodged with the University. The latest date will normally be three months from the date of notification of the outcome of examination;
- b. set a date for the oral examination; and
- c. notify the student in writing

If the outcome of an examination is that the degree is awarded subject to corrections, HDRC will

- a. set the latest date by which the final version of the thesis, including the corrections, must be lodged to Research Office for HDRC approval. The latest date will normally be three months from the date of notification of the outcome of examination;

- b. set a date for the oral examination; and
- c. notify the student in writing.

Where the student does not lodge the final version of the thesis by the set date, the HDRC must either:

- a. set a new date by which the final version must be lodged and notify the student in writing;  
or
- b. determine the result to be 'not awarded'.

#### **6.21 The Outcome of Thesis Examination: Award with Revision and Re-Examination**

If the outcome of an examination is that the degree is awarded after the student is permitted to revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination, the HDRC must:

- a. prescribe a maximum period of further candidature, normally one or two semesters;
- b. set the latest date for the student to resubmit their thesis for examination;
- c. set the date by which the student must re-enroll or apply for suspension of candidature consistently with the procedures;
- d. detail the additional work or changes required;
- e. prescribe any other conditions that must be met by the student; and
- f. notify the student in writing within one week of the decision being made.

The student must re-enroll for the degree whilst the thesis is being revised.

If the student does not do so, the HDRC must determine the result to be 'not awarded'.

The original examiners should be invited to re-examine the thesis if they are available and willing to do so.

The examination of a revised and resubmitted thesis is a new examination of the whole thesis, which must be carried out in accordance with the FNU HDR Thesis Examination Policy.

No further opportunity to revise and resubmit the thesis is permitted as an outcome of the new examination.

#### **6.22 The Outcome of Thesis Examination: Non-Award with an Option to Award Another Degree**

HDRC will:

- a. outline the reasons for non-award;
- b. specify the other degree for which the student is eligible which may be awarded instead;
- c. detail any corrections required to be made to the final version of the thesis to the satisfaction of the HDRC;
- d. set the latest date by which the final version of the thesis, including the corrections, must be lodged with the University. The latest date will normally be three months from the date of notification of the outcome of examination;
- e. set a date for the oral examination; and
- f. notify the student in writing within one week of the decision being made.

If the Independent Chair and the Chair of HDRC jointly judge that the examiners are unable to agree or that the result is undetermined, a third examiner is appointed.

The third examiner examines the thesis or compilation independently and is not given the reports of the co-examiners.

### **6.23 The Outcome of the Thesis Examination: Non-Award**

If the outcome of an examination is that the degree will not be awarded, the relevant committee must:

- a. outline the reasons for non-award; and
- b. notify the student in writing within one week of the decision being made.

### **6.24 Oral examination**

The oral examination is conducted as described in the oral examination section of this policy.

The candidate and the examiners are provided with copies of the examiners' thesis reports prior to the oral examination.

The Research Office arranges the oral examination and a senior academic of FNU acts as Chair of the oral examination panel.

The oral examination may only be held after all examiners have submitted their initial report, which is approved by HDRC.

If the original examiners differ widely in their assessment and a third examiner is required, the report of the third examiner must be received prior to the oral examination.

The candidate must satisfactorily address the corrections suggested by the examiners before obtaining HDRC approval to proceed to the oral examination.

The examination panel for the oral examination must be all examiners of the thesis. One of the examiners (the more senior) will be invited to FNU to conduct the oral exam.

### **6.25 Examination Result**

The Independent Chair reviews the examiners' reports, finalises the oral examination report and submits to Research Office for HDRC approval.

### **7.0 Approval Agency**

FNU Senate.

**8.0 Revision Log**

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

Version	Date of Approval	Comment
1.0	11 December 2019	Approved by the FNU Senate
2.0	2 March 2021	Approved by the FNU Senate
3.0	5 August 2022	Approved by the FNU Senate

**9.0 Policy Sponsor**

Research Office

**10.0 Contact Person**

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

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