



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

## **GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF DOCTORAL THESES INVOLVING CREATIVE WORKS**

In the case of a doctoral thesis involving creative works, 'the thesis' comprises the creative work (which will normally be presented in an exhibition, performance, installation, literary manuscript or interactive event, for example), and a written analytical component (sometimes termed the 'exegesis'). Candidates are required to meet doctoral standards in both components in order to pass the examination.

Three examiners are normally involved in the examination process – an internal and two externals. A convenor, not associated with the thesis discipline, is appointed by the Doctoral Research Committee (DRC) to oversee and facilitate the examination. **All Doctoral Candidates at Massey University will present four bound copies of the written parts of the thesis for examination. Candidates will also arrange an exhibition of their work, if applicable to their project.**

Examiners are requested to (i) attend an exhibition/installation/performance of the candidate's work where appropriate; (ii) write a thesis assessment report, (iii) make their examination recommendation on form **DRC 6.2**, and (iv) attend an oral defence of the candidate's work and written exegesis.

### **Examiner's Written Reports**

#### **1. Confidentiality**

Examiners should write their reports independently and in the strictest confidence. No part of the thesis shall be given to or discussed with any other persons, for any purposes whatsoever. If examiners find they are not qualified to comment on certain technical aspects, then they should seek the approval of the Graduate Research School (GRS) to ask the opinion of someone who has appropriate expertise.

Examiners who require clarification on any point of procedure should seek direction from the Chair of the Doctoral Research Committee through the Graduate Research School.

Examiners' reports are provided to facilitate the examination process and the approval of a final result, and are not primarily intended as feedback to candidates and supervisors. Candidates will normally be permitted to see the full reports under the names of the respective examiners, but this will occur only if the examination process is not compromised in any way by the release of the reports in this form. Unnecessarily derogatory or inappropriate comments may be deleted before the release of the reports. The examiners' recommendation should be made on form DRC 6.2 and is kept confidential to the DRC and the examination panel. **Examiners should not include their final recommendation in the body of their examination report.** The reason for this is because the final result is agreed by all examiners following the submission of the written reports, and it may differ from individual examiners' initial recommendations.

#### **2. Degree**

The Doctor of Philosophy is a research degree awarded for a thesis to the value of 360 credits. A 'creative' PhD comprises creative works plus a written component. Creative works should take a form appropriate to the discipline e.g. performance, literary work, design work, or exhibition. The word length of the written analytical component will normally be 15,000 to 40,000 words including a review of the literature and the creative field, as applicable. The creative work and written component must be presented as a synthesised and coherent whole.

#### **3. Content of Examiner's Report**

Thesis Assessment Reports may vary from a few pages to a more lengthy document. Notations should not be made upon the thesis unless absolutely necessary and helpful to the student, as a more permanent record of your response is needed in the formal report. The content and nature of reports will vary according to the nature of the thesis, and the conventions relevant to the

appropriate discipline. Examiners are asked to make comments on matters common to all theses including general comments on whether:

- The candidate shows familiarity with, and understanding of, the relevant intellectual and creative context...
- The thesis provides a sufficiently comprehensive study of the topic.
- The research findings are suitably articulated and accompanied by adequate exposition.
- The quality of English and general presentation are satisfactory.
- The thesis as a whole makes an original contribution to the subject with which it deals, and the candidate understands the relationship of the thesis to the wider context of knowledge in which it belongs.

For the creative arts disciplines, examiners should also include comment on whether:

- The methods and techniques applied in the execution of the work are appropriate to the subject matter and are aesthetically effective, and properly applied.
- The creative work demonstrates a sufficiently high standard of literary, visual, digital, design, musical, or performance quality, and is presented in a professional manner.
- The research questions have been identified and explored through the creative work, as appropriate.
- There is an appropriate and substantive synthesis between the creative work and the written exegesis.
- The work demonstrates originality of conception and execution.

Many theses now contain work which has previously been published or submitted for publication. Where this has occurred, the thesis must work as an integrated whole with an introduction, conclusion, and linking sections as appropriate. Acceptance of work for publication does not necessarily mean that it meets examination standards. *Examiners must examine all parts of the thesis with equal rigour, and may request changes to any part of the thesis, whether it has been published or not.* Candidates are expected to have a working knowledge of all parts of the thesis, and to be able to answer questions about the thesis as a whole at the oral examination.

In the cases where examiners consider changes are necessary, they should clearly specify the mandatory or recommended changes that should be made to the thesis before it is regarded as of an acceptable standard for the award of the degree. Examiners are not expected to act as editors and no subjective comments or recommendation should be included in the Thesis Assessment Report.

Should the thesis have been submitted within the allowable time, you will receive a form requesting that it be considered for the 'Dean's List of Exceptional Thesis'. The criteria for this are noted on the form.

### **Examiner's Recommendation**

To accompany their report, each examiner should make an initial recommendation of their assessment on the accompanying form **DRC 6.2**. These recommendations apply to the thesis, which includes both the exegesis and the creative works. A recommendation on whether to: award the degree; require emendations or re-examination; or fail the candidate, will be made following the Oral Examination. Examiners are welcome to make comments relating to future publications and conference presentations; these should be made as an attachment to the report. If all three examiners' Thesis Assessment Reports recommend either a fail or re-examination, the examination panel may recommend to the DRC that the candidate be failed without conducting an oral examination. Further notes on each recommendation provided on the form DRC 6.2 are below.

Pass:

The examiner is satisfied that the thesis meets the required standards for the award of the Doctoral degree.

Emendations required:

Emendations are required before the examiner is satisfied that the thesis meets the required standard for the award of the Doctoral degree. Emendations can range from minor grammatical, typographical or bibliographic errors, to more extensive changes involving revision of specified sections, rewriting paragraphs or parts of chapters of the exegesis, and/or changes to the creative works.

Candidates must be able to complete the changes within six months full time study or nine months part time study. If the emendations are to the extent that this is not possible, the candidate should be recommended for a Re-examination.

Re-examination:

The examiner considers that the thesis does not meet an acceptable standard for the award of the Doctoral degree, but contains material of sufficient merit that the required standard may be met following further research, analysis or synthesis of information, and/or further creative work. The candidate will be offered the opportunity to submit a revised thesis for re-examination.

Candidates must be able to complete the changes for the revised thesis within twelve months full time study or eighteen months part time study. If the revisions are to the extent that this is not possible, the candidate should be recommended for Fail.

**Where to forward the Report and Recommendation**

Both the Thesis Assessment Report and recommendation on form DRC 6.2 should be forwarded electronically to [Doctoral.Office@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Doctoral.Office@massey.ac.nz) in Word format. The Graduate Research School will transfer the Thesis Assessment Report into PDF format before it is forwarded to the convenor of the examination. These documents should not be made available to any other person, including the convenor of the examination, supervisor(s) or candidate.

The overseas examiner is not required to return the exegesis, but should not dispose of it until the examination process has been completed. Examiners will receive a letter from the Graduate Research School to notify them of the final result following the negotiation by the convenor. Please note that the examination copy of the exegesis is not necessarily the final copy as the examination process may require the exegesis to be amended. It therefore, cannot be used as an official copy of a Massey University thesis.

If you have any questions regarding the content of these guidelines, or the conduct of the examination, please contact the Graduate Research School at [Doctoral.Office@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Doctoral.Office@massey.ac.nz)

The Examination for doctoral candidates is the final quality step in the doctoral experience. Examiners contribute to a very important part of the degree process, and Massey University is very appreciative of the time and expertise that you contribute. Massey University recognises that the examiner's payment is but a token of thanks for a demanding task. We thank you most sincerely for your assistance.

Dean, Graduate Research School  
MASSEY UNIVERSITY