All Doctoral Candidates at Massey University will present four bound copies of their thesis for 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 thesis examination.

Examiners are requested to (i) write a thesis assessment report, and (ii) make their thesis assessment recommendation on form DRC 6.2. Following receipt of all three thesis assessment reports, the Examination Convenor will arrange a viva or oral with the candidate and two examiners, normally the internal and one external examiner. The third examiner, normally the overseas examiner, will be kept informed of the outcome of the oral by the convenor. On occasions, the third examiner may be required to participate in a pre or post oral teleconference call or on the rare occasion may participate in the viva via a teleconference.

Examiner’s Written Reports

1. Confidentiality
Examiners should write their reports in the strictest confidence and may not confer. Neither the thesis nor any part of it shall be given to or discussed with any other persons, for any purposes whatsoever. If an examiner finds that he/she is not qualified to comment on certain technical aspects, then he/she 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’ initial recommendation on form DRC 6.2 is kept confidential to the DRC and the examination panel. Examiners’ should not include their final recommendation in the body of their thesis assessment report. The reason for this is because the written Thesis Assessment Report at Massey University is regarded as Stage 1 of the examination and the recommendation provides a guideline for the continuing examination process. The final recommendation following the oral examination is regarded as the overall examination recommendation. If this differs from the recommendations on the individual Thesis Assessment Reports this can sometimes cause confusion for the candidate when they receive copies of the written Thesis Assessment Reports following the oral examination.

2. Degrees
The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a research degree which comprises a thesis to the value of 360 credits.

The named doctorates (DBA, DClinPsych, and EdD) are degrees which are comprised of one third course work to the value of 120 credits, and a research thesis to the value of 240 credits. Examiners are required to examine the thesis only. Where a thesis includes papers and/or case studies, published or unpublished, these must be fully integrated into the subject matter and text of the thesis.
3. **Content of 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, the degree the candidate is being examined for, and the conventions relevant to the appropriate discipline. Examiners are asked to make observations on matters common to all theses including general comments on whether:

- the candidate shows familiarity with, and understanding of, relevant literature
- the thesis provides a sufficiently comprehensive study of the topic
- the methods adopted are appropriate to the subject matter and are properly applied
- the research findings are suitably set out and accompanied by adequate exposition
- the quality of English and general presentation is satisfactory
- the thesis as a whole makes an original contribution to the knowledge of 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

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. **Thesis Assessment Reports should generally note the areas where the candidate might be questioned in the oral examination. This is particularly important for areas where changes may be required before the thesis is accepted as being of an acceptable standard.** The overseas examiner must list such questions in detail, and the convenor will ensure that the questions are presented by the two examiners at the oral examination.

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 only. 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, re-writing paragraphs or parts of chapters.

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. 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 in Word format. The Graduate Research School will transfer the Thesis Assessment Report into PDF format before it is forwarded to the convener of the examination. These documents should not be made available to any other person, including the convener of the examination, supervisor(s) or candidate.

The overseas examiner is not required to return the thesis, but should not dispose of it until the examination process had been completed. Examiners will receive a letter from the Graduate Research School to notify them of the final result following the oral examination. The internal and New Zealand examiner should retain the thesis until the oral, at which time they can return the thesis to the student. Please note that the examination copy is not necessarily the final copy of the thesis as the examination process may require the thesis 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

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 for this 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