



PROCEDURES FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREES BOARD

1. **APPLICATIONS, REGISTRATION AND RE-REGISTRATION** are in the domain of the faculties.

2. **SUBMISSION OF THESIS**

It is the responsibility of the candidate to decide when they are ready to upload their thesis (subject of course to the rule that a candidate may not graduate unless they have been registered as a PhD candidate for at least two years). In general, the candidate will be expected to upload their thesis only when their supervisor agrees to its submission, but the University will not insist on the approval of the supervisor before accepting submission of the thesis.

The cardinal requirement for a PhD thesis is that it make a substantial contribution to knowledge and may include only the original work of the candidate, carried out under supervision. The thesis should comprise a coherent and consistent body of work which should reflect the candidate's own efforts and not that of other persons. In cases of collaborative work, the contributors and their role should be acknowledged. This should not form a major part of the thesis and should only be included for good contextual reasons.

A PhD thesis may not be less than 40,000 words (in the case of a thesis incorporating creative work) or more than 80,000 words in length, unless the Dean (acting after consultation with the supervisor) approves a request by the candidate to exceed this limit. Where a Dean allows a longer thesis, they may stipulate a maximum number of words for the thesis. In this case the Dean must inform the Doctoral Degrees Board of the fact and of the stipulation made.

A candidate may elect to submit a PhD with the inclusion of published material (authored or co-authored by the candidate) with the *prior* written approval of the Doctoral Degrees Board (DDB).

A candidate who contemplates including published material in their thesis should note this in their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with their supervisor(s) each year. Permission to include published material must be sought from the DDB prior to submission of the thesis. A thesis which includes publications must remain a thematically coherent, and substantive and scholarly discourse, presented as a composite body of work.¹

An application to the DDB to include publication should be sent to the DDB by the Chair of the Faculty's Doctoral Committee of Assessors (DCoA) and should include:

- Motivation for the inclusion of published material, supported by the supervisor(s)
- A statement of the specific roles of the candidate and each co-author in the work reported, verified by the supervisor.
- Written letters from each co-author, attesting to their agreement on the stated contributions made by the candidate to the study, and the role that they played as co-author, and that they support the inclusion of the publication in the thesis. Where a co-author is themselves a PhD student, they should verify that they will not be including this publication(s) in their own PhD thesis.

¹ For further information, see "Guidelines for the Inclusion of Publications in a Doctoral Thesis"

Should permission be granted to include published material in the thesis, the following declaration is required as a separate page at the front of the thesis (as part of, or immediately following, the declaration that the thesis is the candidate's own work)":

*"I confirm that I have been granted permission by the University of Cape Town's Doctoral Degrees Board to include the following publication(s) in my thesis, and where co-authorships are involved, my co-authors have agreed that I may include the publication(s):
Publication 1
etc. "*

3. DATES FOR SUBMISSION OF THESIS

A PhD candidate may upload an electronic copy of their thesis at any time during the year. Where a candidate intends to submit a thesis for examination, they must inform the DDB Office, by uploading notice of their intention to submit at least 8 weeks prior to the submission of the thesis. It is recommended that the thesis is submitted 5 months before the deadline for qualification entry to the graduation ceremony to allow for unexpected delays in the examination process. To **avoid re-registration** and fee liability for the next academic year, PhD candidates must upload their theses by 12pm on the first day of the new academic year.

The University does not undertake to reach a decision on the award of the degree by any specific date.

4. DOCTORAL COMMITTEE OF ASSESSORS

The Dean (or the nominee to whom the Dean has delegated the authority) constitutes the Doctoral Committee of Assessors, which consists of:

- The Dean, relevant Deputy Dean, or a nominee to whom the Dean has delegated the authority, who shall chair the DCoA.
- Two or three permanent core members. These permanent members should be Faculty members with proven experience as supervisors and examiners. They are to be appointed by the DDB on the recommendation of the Dean, for three-year, renewable terms of Office. (For the Health Sciences Faculty the DDB shall appoint two groups of three: two will be chosen from the one group to be the two core members for a DCoA for a basic science candidate; and two will be chosen from the other group to be the two core members for a DCoA for a candidate working in a clinical discipline. The Chair of the Health Sciences Faculty's Postgraduate Programmes Committee shall make the selection of the two).
- The HoD, or if the HoD is a core member, a nominee of the HoD.
- If required, one or two members with experience in the subject area of the thesis.
- The supervisor(s) as (a) non-voting assessor member(s).

5. EXAMINERS

A minimum of three examiners are appointed, all external to the University of Cape Town. 'External' means there can be no significant or formal association between an examiner and UCT, including current or recent employment at the University in teaching and/or research in either a full-time, part-time or an honorary capacity; or through direct involvement with the thesis, the research for the thesis, or the student.

All examiners should be of high international standing with relevant and significant academic experience. Normally at least two should be international (i.e. outside South Africa). Normally two examiners from the same institution should not be appointed. In exceptional cases, a maximum of one examiner may be appointed who does not hold a PhD degree themselves, in which case the supervisor must provide a strong motivation, which includes evidence of international standing and expertise. The supervisor(s) is/are excluded from examining.

All examiners should have appropriate expertise in a field closely related to the thesis topic. In the case of multi-, trans- and inter-disciplinary work, the DCoA must satisfy itself that an appropriate mix of examiners from relevant disciplines will be capable of examining all aspects of the thesis.

Examiners who have a clear conflict of interest should not be nominated.

An examiner should preferably not have had prior contact with the candidate's work. Where there has been prior contact between a candidate and an examiner nominated by a DCoA, this must be reported by the DCoA to the DDB. The nomination of examiners should not be discussed with or disclosed to the candidate, and there may be no contact between examiners and the candidate while the thesis remains under examination.²

Supervisors may contact prospective examiners to ask if they are available for nomination, and to establish that no conflict of interest exists. This should be done in consultation with the HoD. It is advisable that the supervisor contacts the prospective examiners before nominating them for appointment, as this avoids delays later on. Provided that three examiners have agreed to examine, only three names need be submitted. The supervisor may nominate up to two alternate examiners, if they wish to do so.

6. PROCEDURES AFTER RECEIPT OF NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO UPLOAD A THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

- (a) The DDB Office processes the notice of intention to submit from the candidate and will notify the relevant supervisor to nominate examiners and request the faculty to appoint a DCoA and to submit recommendations for examiners.
- (b) The Dean (or the nominee to whom the Dean has delegated the authority) constitutes the DCoA as described in 4 above.
- (c) The Chair of the DCoA of the relevant Faculty will convene the DCoA.
- (d) The DCoA, after consideration of potential examiners' names approved by the HoD, will nominate at least three examiners for approval by the DDB. Up to two alternate examiners may also be nominated.
- (e) The supervisor will submit a brief report to the DDB Officer, which should be sufficiently specific about the subject matter of the thesis to assist a potential examiner in their decision whether to accept appointment as such. If appropriate, the supervisor may provide a separate report (for the information of the DCoA and DDB only) on factors, other than personal ones, which may have affected the writing of the thesis.
- (f) The Chair (or Deputy Chair) of the DDB will approve the examiners on behalf of the Board and will refer any nominations requiring further consideration to the Board. After approval, the DDB Officer will invite examiners to act and will, after examiners have indicated their acceptance, send to them the electronic copy of the thesis together with the doctoral examination guidelines.
- (g) In the event that examiners, and subsequently the alternates, are unable to act, the DDB Officer will request further nominations from the Chair of the DCoA.

7. EXAMINER'S FORMAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION ON THE THESIS

Examiners will be asked for a recommendation on the thesis by indicating one of the following:

- (i) The candidate should be awarded the degree and no further corrections to the thesis are required.
- (ii) The candidate should be awarded the degree subject to the required corrections.
The corrections required are:
 - Either Trivial/Typographical; or
 - Typographical and more substantial, specified changes. My suggestions are indicated in my report. These corrections do not alter the substance of the thesis in any fundamental manner and therefore major reworking or reinterpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis is not required.

² An exception is made in the case of a joint degree where the partner institution requires the candidate to know the identity of their examiners, for example in a viva voce process.

- (iii) The candidate should not be awarded the degree but should be invited to address my substantive concerns and to revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination.
In this case:
- Either I am prepared to re-examine; or
 - I am not prepared to re-examine.
- (iv) The candidate should not be awarded the degree as the thesis has no prospect of meeting the requirements.

In addition, examiners are required to submit a formal report on the thesis, which should be sufficiently detailed to allow the DCoA to reach an informed judgement.

8. DISCLOSURE OF EXAMINERS' REPORTS TO CANDIDATES AND ANONYMITY OF EXAMINERS

- (a) In the letter of invitation, examiners are informed that it is the normal practice of the DDB to make the contents of examiners' reports available to the candidate when the examination has been completed and the DDB has decided whether or not to award the degree. However, discretion to vary this practice rests with the Board.
- (b) Examiners are also informed at this stage of the normal practice of the DDB, which is to disclose the names of the examiners to the candidate when the decision to award the degree has been made. The examiner is asked to indicate in their reply whether or not they wish their identity to be known.
- (c) It is the policy of the DDB not to reveal the names of examiners (who have agreed to such disclosure) until the decision concerning the award of the degree has been made by the DDB.

9. PROCEDURE ON RECEIPT OF EXAMINERS' REPORTS

When all the examiners' reports have been received, the DDB Office will send them to the relevant DCoA for consideration and recommendation.

The DCoA should report its recommendation to the DDB within two weeks of receipt of the examiners' reports. The report must be submitted on the prescribed form and list one of the following recommendations:

- (i) The candidate should be awarded the degree and no further corrections to the thesis are required.
- (ii) The candidate should be awarded the degree subject to corrections to the satisfaction of the supervisor and the DDB.

The required corrections are:

- Either Trivial/Typographical; or
 - Typographical and more substantial, specified changes. These corrections should not alter the substance of the thesis in any fundamental manner and therefore major reworking or reinterpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis is not required.
- (iii) The candidate should be invited to address my substantive concerns of the examiner (s) and to revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination.
- (iv) The candidate should not be awarded the degree as the thesis has no prospect of meeting the requirements.

If, in applying their minds the DCoA cannot reach consensus or needs advice on an appropriate recommendation, they may co-opt up to two additional subject experts (non-voting) to the DCoA to assist them.

In cases of significant disagreement amongst examiners, the report of the DCoA shall include a formal record of the DCoA's decision conveying their reasons for their recommendation.

If the reason for the DCoA's failure to reach consensus, after following the process and deliberation as outlined in the above paragraphs, relates to suspected bias by a dissenting examiner or to an examiner's report being insufficiently justified, the DCoA may recommend that the report be set aside and a fourth examiner appointed. Alternatively, if the reason for the DCoA's failure to reach consensus, after following the process and deliberation as outlined in the above paragraphs, relates to different assessments reflected in or outcomes proposed in well justified examiners' reports, the DCoA may recommend the appointment of an external assessor. The task of the external assessor is to read the thesis (or relevant parts thereof) together with all examiners' reports (without examiners' names) and advise the DCoA on the respective merits of the examiners' reports, their recommendations and any other aspect/s specifically requested by the DCoA.

A candidate may be required to present himself or herself for an oral examination in exceptional circumstances, following the approval of the Doctoral Degrees Board (see Section 10).

The report of the DCoA should be sufficiently comprehensive to convey to the DDB the reasons for the recommendation of the DCoA and, where the examiners disagree, shall include a formal record of the DCoA meeting.

The DCoA report, together with the examiners' reports, must be submitted by the DDB Officer to the Chair (or Deputy Chair) of the DDB for approval on behalf of the Board, or circulated to the Board for its approval, or tabled at a meeting of the DDB for its consideration.

No hint of the result or of examiners' names should be given to candidates until the DDB has taken a final decision.

A video conference between a dissenting examiner and candidate may be permitted. This procedure is to be utilised in exceptional cases only, after all the above processes have been followed, including the appointment of an external assessor, and where the external assessor recommends that a video conference is necessary in order to reach a conclusion.

10. PROCEDURES FOR CONVENING ORAL EXAMINATION

The examination process does not normally include an oral examination. Where an oral examination is to be included in the process, this may take the form of a "virtual oral examination" where videoconferencing technology is used to allow the participation of examiners in locations outside the University. The candidate and members of the DCoA are expected to be present. In exceptional circumstances, the candidate may be permitted to participate by videoconferencing, at the discretion of the DDB.

The decision to engage in assessment with an oral examination/defence should be specified in the initial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), agreed by the candidate and supervisor.

Examiners are appointed and submit reports as outlined in Sections 5 to 8. The DCoA consults regarding the external examiners' reports and decides whether to proceed with the oral examination/defence. The DDB is informed of the DCoA's recommendation to proceed with an oral defence. When the DDB approves the oral defence, the DCoA must proceed according to the following guidelines:

- (a) The Chair of the DCoA must chair the final oral examination and is responsible for all aspects of administering this examination. It is the chair's responsibility to ensure that Faculty and DDB regulations relating to the oral examination are followed.
- (b) At least two of the external examiners are required to participate in the oral examination. Thus, before proceeding with the oral examination, clarification should be sought as to whether the examiner agrees to participate in a video conference oral examination, which implies having their identity disclosed to the candidate.

- (c) The candidate must be advised of the decision to proceed with the oral defence at least two weeks in advance. The time and venue of the examination, and the names of the participating external examiners, should be communicated to the candidate by the Chair of the DCoA. The Chair of the DCoA will provide the candidate with the external examiners' reports, and preliminary questions (if any) at least one week prior to the scheduled date of the oral defence. An examiner who has elected to have their name withheld will not be identified to the candidate and may not participate in the oral defence.
- (d) The quorum for the final oral examination meeting consists of:
- The PhD candidate
 - The Chair of the DCoA
 - Two members of the DCoA, at least one of whom should have expertise in the subject matter of the thesis
 - Two external examiners
- (e) The DCoA is to formulate an agenda for the meeting and agree upon the process to be followed before the candidate is notified.
- (f) The DCoA will reconvene after the oral examination has taken place in order to evaluate it and make a recommendation to the DDB. Any change in an examiner's evaluation from their original report must be submitted in writing and included with the final recommendation from the DCoA. The final recommendation of the DCoA to the DDB will be based both on the external examiners' reports and on the candidate's ability to defend their thesis.
- (g) The DDB will inform the candidate of the outcome of the examination. No result may be given to the candidate until the DDB has taken a final decision.

11. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CORRECTIONS AND REVISION

The DCoA is required to identify a supervisor or nominee who will oversee corrections and revisions to the thesis. The anonymised external examiners' reports will be sent by the respective faculty office to the supervisor (or nominee). The supervisor (or nominee) will liaise with the candidate to indicate which corrections or amendments to the thesis are necessary. The candidate will be required to submit a schedule of changes made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the supervisor, DCoA and the DDB. The supervisor must certify that the changes reflected in the schedule have been made to the final electronic library copy.

A time limit of 2 months from the date of notification of the result by the DDB office to the candidate, is given for the completion of corrections to the thesis. A candidate required to make revisions to the thesis for re-submission and re-examination must do so within one year from the date of notification by the DDB office to the candidate. Under exceptional circumstances, the Chair (or Deputy Chair) of the DDB may grant an extension of this deadline. This requires a strong motivation by the student, and support from the supervisor(s) and Chair of the DCoA.

Names of examiners (if they have agreed to have them disclosed) may only be revealed to candidates after the entire examination process has been completed and the decision concerning the award of the degree has been made by the DDB.

The DDB may approve a result in one of four categories:

(i) or (ii) result (award of degree subject to corrections)

Relevant sections of the examiners' reports should be extracted by the person/s appointed to supervise such corrections (normally the supervisor). The candidate must also submit a list of changes/corrections made to the thesis (or why they have not been made) to the satisfaction of the supervisor who should certify this to the Chair of the DCoA and thence to the DDB which will then approve the awarding of the degree. Only at this stage may examiners' names be revealed (if they have agreed to disclosure of their name) and subject to the corrections being approved by the DCoA and the DDB.

(iii) result (thesis to be revised and resubmitted)

After extracting relevant sections of the examiners' reports, the appointed person/s should convey to the candidate the nature of revisions required. As the dissenting examiner(s) will normally be re-examining the revised thesis, it is even more important that anonymity of examiners' names is preserved. The candidate must submit a schedule indicating the candidate's response to each of the examiners' suggestions, item by item. Reasons for not accepting a suggestion should be given. The request to supply such a schedule does not detract from the prime importance that the candidate address the external examiners' criticisms within the revised thesis. The schedule of revisions must be approved by the supervisor and will be sent to the dissenting examiner(s) at the discretion of the Chair (or Deputy Chair) of the DDB. A candidate is allowed one opportunity to revise and resubmit their thesis for re-examination.

(iv) result (the doctoral degree should not be awarded)

A thesis which is deemed to have no prospect of meeting the requirements for the PhD degree will be given the result "Fail." There is no opportunity for a candidate to revise and resubmit a failed thesis for re-examination.

Note: Where substantive plagiarism has been established, the result will be a fail.³

12. SUBSEQUENT PROCEDURES

Prior to graduation, it is the responsibility of the DDB Office to finalise the academic records of PhD graduands. This includes the verification of electronic library copies and the recording of embargoes (where required) on system.

The DDB Office will ensure that a consolidated list of PhD graduands is submitted to the Senate meeting at which the graduation lists are approved.

After graduation, the Student Records Office exports the PhD graduates' electronic library copies from PeopleSoft to UCT Libraries.

The DDB Office sends a formal e-mail communication to examiners thanking them for their contribution to the examination process.

13. PUBLICATION

Part or the whole of the thesis may be published prior to presenting the thesis for examination. However, no publication may (without prior permission of Senate) contain a statement that the published material was or is to be submitted in part or in full for the degree.

When presenting a thesis, a candidate shall be deemed by so doing to grant free licence to the University to publish it in whole or in part in any format that the University deems fit. PhD graduates' electronic library copies will be made available on the OpenUCT institutional repository, with the exception of those that have requested an embargo or suppression of their electronic library copies.

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³ Senate Policy on referencing conventions and declaration re plagiarism (PC11/99 dated 6.12.1999).