

Notes for Examiners of a Doctor of Education (EdD) Thesis

Reference: Doctoral Policy section 4.12

The Doctor of Education is a professional (or named) doctorate. It has a credit value of 360 points which is equivalent to three years of full-time study. The course of study consists of:

- Part 1: Four compulsory courses (total 120 points)
- Part 2: Thesis (240 points)

The expected outcomes of the EdD are that graduates will have advanced knowledge and research skills to lead and contribute to initiatives to improve educational policy and practice. They will be equipped to advance their professional careers through pursuing opportunities to address practice, policy, and professional problems.

A doctoral degree is awarded for a thesis which demonstrates the candidate's **ability to carry out independent research** and to **demonstrate critical insight**, and which constitutes a **significant and original contribution** to knowledge in, or understanding of, a field of study. The contribution to knowledge and level of originality should be consistent with three to four years' full-time study and supervised research training after a Bachelor's degree with Honours.

While a thesis for a professional doctorate in education may be shorter than a PhD thesis (commensurate with a lower credit value) the standard of the research and scholarship that is expected is no less than that expected of a PhD.

The thesis should demonstrate the candidate's ability to:

- Engage with relevant current research and analysis in order to investigate and reflect on their own and others' professional contexts
- Demonstrate advanced research skills and knowledge that are relevant to professional practice
- Design and carry out independent research that makes an original contribution to their professional field.

The thesis must be clearly, accurately and cogently written and documented in a suitable scholarly manner. It should reveal a capacity to relate the research topic to the broader framework of knowledge in the disciplinary area in which it falls and there should be an appropriate balance between the different parts of the thesis.

The thesis must be a single, integrated report. If the research consists of discrete studies, their relationship to one another must be demonstrated. The thesis may include published material, provided that the research has been conducted under supervision during the period of enrolment for the professional doctorate.

Examiners

The thesis is examined by three examiners who are people with standing in the field of study. One will normally be a member of an overseas university or similar institution (the overseas examiner); the intention behind this is to establish a common standard between New Zealand and overseas scholarship, and to preserve the international standing of the Victoria degree. Normally, one examiner will be from another New Zealand university (the external New Zealand examiner). The third examiner will normally be an academic member of Victoria University (the internal examiner).

Examiners must not communicate with the candidate except through the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) before the completion of the examination process. Any consultation between examiners and supervisors must be conducted through the Dean FGR.

Conflicts of interest

The appointment of examiners is subject to the University's Conflicts of Interest Statute <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/conflicts-of-interest-statute.pdf> Current or former supervisors, or researchers who have co-published with the candidate, may not be appointed as examiners. If during the examination process you discover a potential conflict of interest, or any other problem, please inform the Dean FGR peter.whiteford@vuw.ac.nz.

The examiner's report

You are asked to (1) write a report on the quality of the thesis and (2) make a confidential recommendation to the Dean FGR on the outcome. Please **do not** include the recommendation in your report on the thesis, as your report is released to the candidate before the oral defence. Instead, use the enclosed **Examiner's Recommendation Form**. In addition, the overseas examiner is asked to provide a separate set of questions that are not released to the candidate prior to the oral defence. (**NB:** questions that are embedded within the report will be made available to the candidate in advance.) You are also invited to make a confidential recommendation to the Dean FGR as to whether you consider the thesis to be of sufficient quality to merit consideration for inclusion in the Dean's list. If you wish to comment on issues not specifically related to the thesis but of concern to you, such as supervision or resource matters, please do so in a separate confidential report addressed to the Dean FGR.

Examiners' reports are typically of at least 3-4 pages in length and are expected to provide the candidate with constructive feedback. Where revisions are called for, you are encouraged to be very specific about those revisions that you feel are crucial to the acceptability of the thesis, bearing in mind that a specific set of revisions will be agreed upon by the examiners after the oral defence.

Examiners' reports must be independent. Consultation among examiners before their reports have been submitted is not permitted. In cases where examiners make differing recommendations in their reports, the Dean FGR may require consultation to occur before the oral defence.

Where the thesis is embargoed prior to submission for examination, you will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Reports should be submitted to the Doctoral Examinations Administrator within eight weeks of your receiving the thesis. Please **do not** send your report directly to the Head of School or supervisor.

Oral examination

An oral defence is a mandatory part of the examination process at Victoria University. The oral examination is usually conducted by the New Zealand and internal examiners under an independent chair and questions provided by the overseas examiner will be presented to the candidate. The NZ examiner will attend via Zoom unless they are either based in Wellington, or the candidate's School agrees to fund their travel to Wellington for the oral defence. It may be possible for the overseas examiner to be involved via audio or video link; however, overseas examiners are still asked to submit questions in writing. The primary supervisor will normally be in attendance, but not as part of the examining panel and not during the examiners' deliberations about the outcome of the oral defence.

Movement to the oral defence is not automatic, but requires scrutiny of all reports by the Dean FGR. As noted above, further consultation with examiners may sometimes be necessary before the oral can be approved. At such time, anonymised reports will be circulated among the examiners.

Distribution of reports

Once the decision to proceed to oral has been confirmed, all examiners' reports will be made available to the candidate, the supervisor/s, and other examiners, at least five working days prior to the oral. Reports will be released with the names of the examiners. The candidate will not receive a copy of the examiners' recommendations; however, the comments, suggestions and overall assessment of the thesis will indicate matters that may arise in the oral defence.

Any part of your report that you do not want released to the candidate or a third party should be submitted in a separate document and marked "Confidential to the Examiners". The University is subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act and the Privacy Act. Opinion from both the Ombudsman and the Privacy Commissioner indicates that your report may be considered personal information about the candidate. The candidate could request access to it under the Official Information Act. If such a request is made, the University must establish whether or not there is a reason to withhold the examiner's report under the provisions of the relevant Act.

Amendments or revisions and confirmation of results

The examination panel will determine, at the oral defence, what corrections or amendments the candidate is required to make to the thesis before the degree can be awarded. These will be documented by the panel and conveyed to the candidate. Approval of such corrections is managed by the School and usually delegated to the internal examiner. If a candidate is required to revise and re-submit the thesis for second examination, they will need to complete the revisions under supervision. The Dean FGR will confirm the overall recommendation of the examination panel.