

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

Reference: [Doctoral Regulations for PhD and other Doctorates](#), section 15

Thank you for agreeing to examine a Victoria University of Wellington Doctor of Education candidate's thesis. Here is some information on the doctoral examination process at Victoria University. For further information, please refer to the thesis examination standard terms and conditions or email the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) Thesis Examinations Team at fgr-exams@vuw.ac.nz.

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About the Doctor of Education (EdD)

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 that demonstrates the candidate's **ability to carry out**

independent research and **demonstrate critical insight**, and that 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.

About the examiners

A doctoral thesis is examined by three examiners who are people with standing in the field of study:

- The “**Internal Examiner**” is most often an academic member of Victoria University of Wellington. The Internal Examiner will be present in person at the viva and will usually oversee the candidate's corrections and amendments following the viva.
- The “**New Zealand Examiner**” is usually from a university or institution within New Zealand but may be from Australia or another country within a reasonable time difference of New Zealand. They are expected to attend the viva by video conference, unless they are in Wellington on the day, in which case they may attend in person.
- The “**Overseas Examiner**” 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. The Overseas Examiner is not usually expected to attend the viva, but is asked to provide questions to be asked on their behalf. These questions are not shared with the candidate before their viva, so please do not include them in your report.

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](#). 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, by emailing FGR-exams@vuw.ac.nz.

Confidentiality

Theses may include commercially confidential information, patent and other intellectual property filings, sensitive patient or client information, or other embargoes. Unless we advise you otherwise, you must keep the thesis confidential. You must use reasonable precautions to keep the thesis in confidence and not divulge it or any of its information to others. At the end of the thesis examination process, you must securely delete all copies of the thesis in your control or possession.

Examiner Report form in Panoho

We use an online research student management system called Panoho for the examination process. Examiners receive an account to log in and download the thesis documents for review. The Examiner Report workflow is used to upload your Examiner Report and to submit your confidential recommendation to the Dean, FGR by the agreed due date, usually within eight weeks of receiving the thesis. Please do not include your examination recommendation within your report or send your report directly to the Head of School or supervisor.

The Examiners Recommendation tab is separate and is not shared with the candidate. As well as your recommendation as to the quality of the thesis, it asks you to make a confidential recommendation on whether the thesis should be considered for inclusion in the Dean's List.

Once all examiner's reports are submitted, they are reviewed by the Dean. The candidate receives the reports in full after the Dean confirms that the viva will proceed.

If you wish to raise concerns that are not directly related to the thesis, such as matters relating to supervision or resources, please provide these in a separate confidential report addressed to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research.

The Examiner's Report

There is no set format for these reports, although they are typically of at least 3–4 pages in length and are expected to provide the candidate with constructive feedback. In addition to that feedback, the Dean would appreciate your comments on the following:

- the extent to which the candidate has engaged with relevant current research and analysis in order to investigate and reflect on their own and others' professional contexts;
- the extent to which the candidate has demonstrated advanced research skills and knowledge that are relevant to professional practice;
- the extent to which the candidate has designed and carried out independent research that makes an original contribution to their professional field.

Where revisions are called for, you are encouraged to be 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 Examination Committee present at the viva.

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 may require consultation to occur before the viva.

Any part of your report that you do not want released to the candidate or a third party should be submitted in a separate email to FGR-Exams@vuw.ac.nz 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 there is a reason to withhold the examiner's report under the provisions of the relevant Act.

Academic Integrity

If you believe that the thesis contains plagiarised material or you have other concerns about academic integrity in this thesis, please tick "yes" and either:

For minor concerns, outline your concerns in your report (those that could reasonably be addressed by the candidate in amendments or revisions).

For more serious concerns, email fgr-exams@vuw.ac.nz summarising your concerns. The Exams Team will take your concerns to the Dean.

Recommendation

The Examiners Recommendations are included in the Panoho Examiner Report form. They are confidential to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research and are not shared with the candidate. The recommendations will be made available to the Chair of the viva. Please do not include the recommendation in your report on the thesis. The form also invites you to make a confidential recommendation on whether the thesis is of sufficient merit to be considered 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, by emailing FGR-exams@vuw.ac.nz.

Dean's List recommendation

The Dean's list is reserved for theses that are judged to be of exceptional quality. That quality is expected to be shown in every aspect of the candidate's work, including the originality and significance of the research and scholarship, and the quality of expression and overall presentation. The Dean will also receive a recommendation on the quality of the viva and the level of correction required. Timeliness of completion may also be taken into consideration. You are asked if you recommend that the thesis be considered for inclusion on the Dean's list.

Questions for the viva

The Examination Committee for the viva consists of the internal examiner, the New Zealand examiner, and an independent Chair appointed by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research.

Therefore, both the Internal and New Zealand examiners should answer "yes" to this question in the online form. The overseas examiner is not expected to attend and therefore will usually answer "no" and will then be asked to provide three to five questions for the Examination Committee to ask on their behalf.

Unless the whole viva is to be held online at the candidate's request, the internal examiner is expected to attend in person. The New Zealand examiner is expected to attend by video conference (Zoom) but may attend in person if available. The overseas examiner is not expected to attend the viva, but must submit questions as part of their assessment. They may attend if available.

The Faculty of Graduate Research has no funding to support examiner travel or related expenses. If you wish to explore the possibility of attending at the candidate's School's expense, please contact the FGR Exams team at FGR-Exams@vuw.ac.nz to discuss this.

Further consultation

If there are significant issues raised in the reports, or significant differences of opinion among the examiners, the Dean may initiate further consultation directly with the examiners, usually via the circulation of anonymised reports.

Distribution of reports

Once the decision to proceed to viva has been confirmed, all examiners' reports will be made available simultaneously to the candidate, the supervisor(s), and other examiners at least five working days before the viva. 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 viva.

About the viva

A viva is a mandatory part of the examination process at Victoria University of Wellington. The viva will usually be conducted by the New Zealand and Internal Examiners under an independent Chair. In certain circumstances, the Dean may invite the Overseas Examiner to join via video conference. The primary supervisor will normally attend but is not part of the examining panel and will not be present during the examiners' deliberations about the outcome of the viva.

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

A time and date for the viva will be arranged by FGR shortly after the thesis is sent out to examiners. The arrangements are made well in advance because we understand the constraints on examiners' schedules. This date is provisional until the Dean has approved the viva, after considering the three examiners' reports. The setting of a provisional date does not in any way imply an expectation of a particular outcome.

Amendments and confirmation of Examination Outcome

At the viva the Examination Committee will determine what amendments the candidate is required to make to the thesis before the degree can be awarded. These will be documented by the Chair and conveyed to the candidate. Approval of such amendments is managed by the School and usually delegated to the Internal Examiner. If the candidate is required to revise and resubmit the thesis for a second examination, they will need to complete the revisions under supervision. The Dean FGR will confirm the overall recommendation of the examination panel via the Examination Outcome workflow in Panoho.

For more information, please refer to our [Thesis Examination Standard Terms and Conditions](#)