

Master's Thesis Procedure

This procedure is subject to, and should be read in conjunction with, the VUW [Master's Thesis Policy](#). It outlines the examination procedure for MDes, MDI, MArch, MArch(Prof), MBS, MIA and MLA theses, identifying in particular how design-focussed theses are examined in accord with the VUW policy. In turn, each of the faculty's two schools determines their specific process in line with the university's [Master's Thesis Policy](#) and the faculty's Master's Thesis Procedure.

1 ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES

When reading the university's [Master's Thesis Policy](#), note that in the Faculty of Architecture and Design, the Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) is the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students).

2 EXAMINERS

2.1 Selection of Examiners for All Master's thesis programmes

- a) Each Master's thesis is examined by one internal and one external examiner as set out in section 4.10.1 of the [Master's Thesis Policy](#).
- b) It is important that examiners are at "arm's length" from the student and the thesis. In this context, although examiners (or potential examiners) may attend crits or reviews, where they may ask for clarification of particular points where appropriate, they must not offer any comments that could be construed as providing guidance on the development of the thesis.
- c) As noted in section 4.10.1 c of the [Master's Thesis Policy](#), prospective examiners should be approached informally by the supervisor or Head of School well in advance of the expected submission of the thesis. This is to confirm that the examiners are willing and able to complete the examination in the expected timeframe of one month. Candidates can be consulted on potential examiners, but must not be told which examiners have been nominated or appointed.
- d) As noted in section 4.10.1 d of the [Master's Thesis Policy](#), the Head of School, after appropriate consultation, shall recommend examiners to the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students) (via the Postgraduate Student Advisor) who will, if satisfied, endorse this recommendation. The Head of School is required to provide the Associate Dean (via the Postgraduate Student Advisor) with a brief curriculum vitae for the external examiner unless this has been submitted for a previous examination.

2.2 Selection of Examiners for MArch(Prof), MDI, MIA, MLA

It is expected that design-focussed theses will be examined by external examiners with strong design expertise. However, there may be cases where an internal examiner may have an appropriate expertise outside the field of design. In such circumstances, a brief justification should accompany the recommendation for appointment.

2.3 Late Changes to the Allocation of Examiners

If circumstances require a change of examiners, the Head of School, after appropriate consultation, shall recommend further examiners to the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students) for approval. Documentation should be sent through the Postgraduate Student Advisor.

3 VISUAL PRESENTATION FOR DESIGN-FOCUSED THESES

- a) In the case of design-focused theses, schools may also require a visual presentation where the student's submission is presented in front of the examiners.
- b) Note that it is the thesis which is specifically examined, while the visual presentation provides clarification for the examiners.
- c) Any visual presentation must be based on the thesis, and cannot include any additional or amended material, models or images (except for enlargement or formatting of images).
- d) The format and procedures relating to the visual presentation will be determined by each school in accord with the framework established in the VUW [Master's Thesis Policy](#) and the Faculty of Architecture and Design Master's Thesis Procedure.

4 EXAMINATION

- a) The thesis is submitted to the Faculty Office and then sent to the two examiners who independently evaluate the thesis and each provide a written report and a recommended grade (using the A+, A, A-....E scale) to the Postgraduate Student Adviser within 1 month of receiving it.
- b) On behalf of the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students), the Faculty Postgraduate Student Advisor sends the two examiner's reports to the appropriate School Research Committee (SRC) requesting a recommendation on the final outcome.
- c) The final grade shall be determined in accord with 4.10.4 of the [Master's Thesis Policy](#). The SRC will review the examiners' reports and recommend an outcome of the examination to the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students) via the Postgraduate Student Advisor.
- d) The SRC process will provide for supervisor comment if there is grade discrepancy.
- e) In accord with 4.10.4 f of the [Master's Thesis Policy](#), on the basis of the SRC's recommendation the Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Students) determines the final grade for the thesis, and then the Postgraduate Student Advisor will:
 - (i) communicate the result to the candidate, and send the candidate copies of the examiners' reports and any additional reports; and
 - (ii) send copies of the examiners' reports, any additional reports (if these have not already been distributed) and the result to the supervisor(s); and
 - (iii) inform the examiners of the outcome of the examination.
- f) The award of a particular grade cannot be conditional on amendments being made. Where necessary examiners can suggest editorial changes be made prior to lodging the thesis in the library, but this is separate to the grading process. If more extensive changes are required to bring the thesis up to an acceptable standard, the candidate must re-enrol (see section 4.10.5 b of the [Master's Thesis Policy](#)).
- g) The award of Merit or Distinction in the MArch and the MDes degrees (which are thesis only) is based upon the thesis grade. The award of Merit or Distinction in the MDI, MArch(Prof), MBS, MIA and MLA degrees is based upon the candidate's performance across their entire Master's programme including coursework and thesis.