Instructions for Nominating Examiners for a Graduate Research Thesis

Chair of Examiners
The head of department normally acts as Chair of Examiners, unless the head of department is the student’s supervisor. The student's supervisor may not act as Chair of Examiners under any circumstances. If the Chair of Examiners is absent from the University for long enough to delay the progress of the examination, another Chair of Examiners is appointed from senior academic members of the department. The replacement will remain as Chair of Examiners until the end of the examination, unless otherwise advised. The Chair of Examiners must be registered as a Principal Supervisor at the University.

A key responsibility for a Chair of Examiners is to make recommendations regarding the appointment of external examiners, in compliance with both the spirit and guidelines for selection, so that theses are examined by researchers of recognised international standing, while avoiding any real or perceived potential conflict of interest. Recommendations from the Chair of Examiners are expected to result in thesis examinations that are academically robust, fair, impartial, and conducted with integrity in a timely way, preserving both the confidentiality of the examination process and protecting the rights of students in recognition of their original research.

Eligibility of proposed examiners
1. Three external examiners are nominated in case a third examiner is required during the examination process. The third examiner does not have to be contacted at this stage.
2. **At least one examiner must be from overseas**, however for a Masters (Research) thesis, it is encouraged that at least one examiner is based overseas. Where an exemption for an overseas examiner is granted normally no more than one examiner will be appointed from within Victoria.
3. All examiners must be from different institutions.
4. At least one of the first two examiners must, within the last 5 years, be actively associated with a university or an institution of higher learning or a research institution, or hold equivalent demonstrable research expertise in the field.
5. Examiners must have previous experience as a supervisor or examiner equivalent to the degree which they will examine.
6. The nomination of an examiner from within this University will not be approved, nor will an examiner who has had a formal association with the University within the past five years and/or during the examination. Formal association is normally interpreted as meaning employment at the University in teaching and/or research as either a full-time, part-time or sessional staff member, or in an honorary capacity or through direct involvement with the thesis (that is, through reading drafts or discussing the research). Examiners nominated from areas where University of Melbourne graduate research students may be placed will not be approved, as listed in the Approved Outside Institutions: [policy.unimelb.edu.au/schedules/MPF1284-ScheduleA.pdf](policy.unimelb.edu.au/schedules/MPF1284-ScheduleA.pdf). It is encouraged that the Find an Expert site is checked as academic staff listed will be considered ineligible to act as an examiner. Refer to Find an Expert at: [findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au](findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au). It is also strongly recommended that internet checks using the proposed examiners’ names and ‘unimelb’ as the search terms are used.
7. Examiners must be impartial and be free from bias either for or against the student. Where a nominated examiner is from within Victoria, assurance of independence is required. If there has been in the last 5 years, or will be in the near future, any formal association between the proposed examiners and the student, or the supervisor/s or the University of either a personal, professional or commercial nature that may be considered as a conflict of interest, they should not be nominated. Individuals who have directly collaborated in work with the student and/or with the student's supervisor/s should not be nominated as examiners, and individuals who have indirectly collaborated with the student and/or with the student's supervisors may be appointed only if it can be clearly demonstrated that there has been no direct relationship that would lead to an actual conflict of interest. For example, if the supervisor/s and potential examiner have worked together with a small number of others on a paper or a grant application within the preceding 5 years, there is direct conflict of interest, and that individual may not be appointed as an examiner. On the other hand, where the relationship is one in which many individuals are engaged, such as may happen when papers or grant proposals arise from large multi-centre projects, if the supervisor and potential examiner have no direct contact with each other, the Chair of Examiners may make a submission to the Examinations Office that documents the relationship and argues that there is no substantive conflict of interest. **Failure to disclose conflicts of interest or cases where a conflict of interest might reasonably be perceived to exist may be considered grounds for research misconduct, as outlined in the Misconduct Procedure (MPF1164).**

Procedure
1. The supervisors, head of department and/or Chair of Examiners must consult when nominating examiners.
2. The Chair of Examiners must consider any names forwarded by the student as unsuitable and the reasons given for exclusion. Students may nominate up to two individuals whom they do not wish appointed as examiners. In exceptional circumstances, students may nominate further individuals.
3. The Nomination of Examiners form must be completed in full.
4. A brief rationale with a biographical sketch or CV is required if (a) an examiner has neither supervision or examination experience of the equivalent degree, (b) where a nominated examiner is not clearly a member of a university or research institution or (c) where a nominated examiner does not have a degree equivalent to the degree being examined.
5. Any variation to the eligibility of examiners as above requires submitted justification explaining that the unique expertise is essential to the examination, and documenting the relationship between the supervisor/s, student and proposed examiner, so that the extent of any possible conflict of interest introduced into the examination process as a consequence of the proposed appointment can be independently determined.
6. Examiners should be nominated before the thesis is submitted for examination to avoid delays with the commencement of the examination.
7. The department is responsible for informally contacting the nominated examiners who will be examining the thesis to ascertain whether they are available to act, especially in cases where the thesis has been submitted for examination, and all examiners should be asked to declare that they have no conflict of interest with the student, or the student's supervisor/s, or the University, of either a personal, professional, or commercial nature. Suggested text for contacting potential examiners can be found at: gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/staff/examiners/exam-faqs. Reserve examiners do not need to be contacted at the nomination stage and will only be contacted after consultation with the Chair of Examiners.
8. The Examinations Office will formally invite the first two examiners to act, asking that they complete the examination within six weeks and not exceeding eight weeks.
9. In all cases, the names of the examiners nominated and appointed shall not be disclosed to the student or to any person except for the Chair of Examiners, the supervisor(s), the Research Higher Degrees Committee, and the Examinations Office.

Dissertation and Creative Works (where the creative component includes a performance or exhibition of visual art works)
1. Either two or three examiners will be appointed. In all cases a durable record of the performance or exhibition must be made and submitted with the dissertation.
2. At least one examiner must be resident from outside Victoria. In the case of a Masters (Research) degree, both examiners may be from within Victoria.
3. Where there is no evidence of supervision and/or examination experience for those in practice-led research, examiners may be approved on the basis of a brief CV or a short biographical sketch.
4. The Chair of Examiners will also attend the performance or exhibition.
5. Students are required to submit an extended abstract of 1,000-3,000 words to the Chair of Examiners for forwarding to the examiners one week prior to the viewing, unless the dissertation is submitted at or around the same time as the viewing.
6. Travel arrangements will be the department's responsibility and arrangements should be made once the Examinations Office has advised that all examiners nominated have been assessed and approved. The Chair of Examiners is responsible for taking into account the availability of examiners, scheduling of the student and supervisors, and selection and scheduling of the venue to ensure confidentiality is maintained. The Chair of Examiners may recommend that examiners attend the public performance or exhibition at different times to prevent their identification by the student. Where there is normally audience participation and interaction with the presenter during public performances or exhibitions, it is the responsibility of the Chair of Examiners to ensure that the student cannot inappropriately influence the examiners to affect assessment.

Relevant policy and procedures
Examination of Graduate Research Students Policy (MPF1207): policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1207
Examination of Graduate Research Students Procedure (MPF1262): policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1262

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