

Guidelines for conducting an Oral Thesis Examination at Deakin University

The following guidelines are to support the administration of the oral thesis examination process. They should be read in conjunction with the *HDR Assessment Procedure* and *Schedule C: Oral Thesis Examination*.

Preparation and lead up to the oral thesis examination meeting

1. The principal or executive supervisor will advise prospective examiners of the oral thesis examination component and subsequent timeline when s/he approaches them to be involved. The principal or executive supervisor will confirm before nomination of examiners that at least one examiner can attend the oral thesis examination in person or via videoconference and will consult with their Head of Academic Unit about which examiners may be requested to attend in person at the expense of the Academic Unit.
2. The examiner/s nominated to attend the oral thesis examination can be either domestic or international.
3. At the time the examiners are nominated, the Head of Academic Unit nominates a Panel Chair from the Academic Unit of the supervisor. An alternative Panel Chair should be nominated and briefed at the same time as the Panel Chair.
4. Where possible, the oral thesis examination will be conducted on campus. However, a remote location is permitted if that location meets the minimum technical requirements for the oral examination, and there are appropriate mechanisms to authenticate the identity of the student.
5. Remote participants in the examination should use a headset where possible to reduce feedback.
6. The student and panel members will receive at least ten working days' notice of the time and location of the oral thesis examination and any other requirements. Ideally two dates will be arranged at the initial scheduling. These should be communicated to all participants. Other requirements may include software, connectivity tests and proof of identity of the student.

Conduct of the oral thesis examination meeting

7. Oral thesis examinations may be conducted via a video link with audio, but they will not be recorded.
8. All participants will test connectivity 30 minutes prior to the oral examination.
9. A standard oral thesis examination duration is approximately two hours and may run for a maximum of 4 hours, including breaks and all proceedings in item 10 below.
10. Proceedings must be collegial, constructive and the following format is suggested:
 - a. Panel Chair introduction
 - b. Student presentation (optional)
 - c. Panel members ask questions of student and student responds

- d. The student is asked to leave the proceedings while panel members discuss and come to a collective recommendation. Where a panel member dissents from the rest of the group, this information may be conveyed to the student.
- e. The student is asked to return to the proceedings and is verbally informed of the recommendation of the panel. Student is advised that the final decision is made by the Thesis Examination Subcommittee.

Role of the Panel Chair

- 11. The Panel Chair and alternative Panel Chair (in case of last minute absence) must read the thesis and examination reports.
- 12. The Panel Chair will act as a facilitator and contributor (for example, can ask questions of student) and will manage the event, including:
 - a. welcoming all parties and providing a brief introduction to the conduct of the oral thesis examination
 - b. allowing all parties to ask and fully answer questions
 - c. ask questions from non-attending examiners
 - d. ensuring the requirements of the HDR Assessment Procedure and Schedule C: Oral Thesis Examinations are followed
 - e. ensuring that a final recommendation is made at the conclusion of the examination and this is communicated clearly to the student.
- 13. The Panel Chair will make a final recommendation (with report if required) to the Thesis Examination Subcommittee on behalf of the panel via the online examination system. The examiner reports will also be provided to the Subcommittee.

Role of the Examiner

- 14. The examiner is required to read all examiners' reports, in addition to the thesis prior to the oral thesis examination.
- 15. The examiner may be required to download relevant software to facilitate the oral thesis examination, but is not expected to acquire or receive hardware.
- 16. Where requested, the required examiner may attend the oral thesis examination electronically or in person at the expense of the Academic Unit. The non-required examiners may choose to attend electronically or in person, or in their absence they may request the Panel Chair to ask questions on their behalf.

Role of the Student

- 17. The student may be required to download relevant software to facilitate the oral thesis examination, but is not expected to acquire or receive hardware.
- 18. The student may be required to, or may choose to, deliver an additional public presentation prior to the oral thesis examination.
- 19. The student should answer all questions asked of them by the Panel Chair and attending examiner/s.

Role of Deakin Research

20. Deakin Research will liaise with all participants to schedule an oral thesis examination, including all facility bookings on Deakin campuses (including the technical requirements for the examination), at a time that must be mutually convenient for all participants. The expected timeline must be clearly detailed in the formal email invitation to examiners. Supervisors are not involved in this process.
21. If an examination has to be postponed, Deakin Research will reschedule the examination as soon as possible within one month of the original examination date.
22. Deakin Research will provide an administrative secretary who will attend an oral examination to support the Panel Chair. The secretary may not participate in the formal deliberations of the meeting, but may advise the Panel Chair on process, assist with any connection issues and complete other tasks as relevant to the conduct of the oral thesis examination.