Master’s Thesis Policy
Research Policy Group

1 Purpose
This policy states the University’s position regarding the enrolment, supervision and examination of candidates for Master’s theses, where the thesis has a value of 90 points or more. The policy should be read in conjunction with the Personal Courses of Study Statute and the relevant Master’s degree statutes. Compliance with the policy is overseen by the Faculty of Graduate Research.

2 Organisational Scope
This is a University-wide policy.

3 Definitions
For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Associate Dean (PGR): The person in each Faculty who is responsible for the approval of all administrative decisions and for all academic matters related to the postgraduate research degree programmes of candidates within their Faculty.

Dean FGR: The Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR).

Enrolled A status acquired by a candidate that starts when they meet all enrolment conditions and ends when the candidate lodges the completed thesis in the University library, withdraws from or fails the qualification, or the University terminates the status.

Faculty of Graduate Research: The body charged with general responsibility for and oversight of the University’s postgraduate research degree programmes.

Full-time candidate: Candidates are deemed to be full-time when they are able to devote a minimum of 30 hours per week to the thesis, on average during the period of enrolment for the thesis. This workload excludes statutory holiday periods. Note: Regulations for a Victoria scholarship may require more than this minimum.

Half-time candidate: Candidates who cannot work on the thesis for the minimum amount of 30 hours per week are deemed to be half-time.

Home Faculty: The Faculty responsible for the Master’s degree programme in which the candidate is enrolled.

Postgraduate Coordinator: A person to whom the relevant Head of School has delegated the authority for postgraduate matters.
PGR: Postgraduate Research.

Registration The period for which candidates are under supervision. Registration excludes periods of suspension and the period following submission of the thesis for examination, unless the candidate is required to undergo a further period of supervision. Fees are charged for periods of registration.

Research Portfolio A particular type of thesis offered in some disciplines. A coherent body of research-based work comprising one or more projects involving independent scholarship, and/or creative activity conducted under supervision, organised around a central research theme or subject and having a value of 90 points or more. The provisions set out in this policy for a thesis apply equally to a research portfolio except where otherwise stated.

School Research Committee (SRC): A committee in each School which has the responsibility for advising the Head of School on research and postgraduate matters.

Supervisor: The person who is appointed to provide academic and administrative guidance to the candidate during their enrolment for the thesis.

Suspension: The approved period of time during which a candidate pays no fees, receives no academic supervision and has no access to University resources.

Termination: The result of action the University may take to end a candidate’s enrolment.

Thesis: The outcome of independent research, scholarship, and/or creative activity conducted under supervision and having a value of 90 points or more. For works of design, creation or performance, the work should include a written commentary.

4 Policy Content and Guidelines

4.1 Entry Requirements

(a) The entry requirements for the individual Master’s theses are set out in the statutes for the relevant degrees.

(b) The Head of School approves the enrolment, having established that:

(i) the general area of study is appropriate, taking account of the general research strategy of the School, and can be supported by the School; and

(ii) the School can provide an appropriate academic supervisor.

Note: Where the school has approval to offer the option of a research portfolio, the Head of School determines which type of thesis the student may enrol in.

4.2 Enrolment and registration

Requirements relating to the duration of a thesis are set out in the Personal Courses of Study Statute 819.

4.2.1 Conditions of enrolment

(a) A candidate must be enrolled continuously until:
(i) the completed thesis is lodged in the University library; or
(ii) the candidate withdraws from the degree; or
(iii) the University terminates the candidate’s enrolment; or
(iv) the candidate fails the thesis.

(b) If a candidate has been neither registered nor suspended for a period of three months, they are deemed to have withdrawn. In exceptional circumstances such a withdrawal may be appealed in writing to the Dean FGR.

(c) Continued enrolment is conditional upon satisfactory progress being made as set out in s4.8.

4.2.2 Variations to enrolment or registration

(a) A candidate may apply to vary their registration on the following grounds:
   (i) sickness of the candidate or of a close family member
   (ii) pregnancy or childbirth or complications arising from these
   (iii) death of a close family member
   (iv) unforeseen complications related to human participants or essential equipment which delay data-collection and/or analysis
   (v) failure of any University committee to provide requisite feedback or permission to allow the research to continue
   (vi) failure of an external body to provide material essential to the research or any specific approvals (including ethics approvals) within an agreed timeframe
   (vii) changes in employment status (for half-time candidates).

(b) An application for a variation of registration should be made on the appropriate form available from the home Faculty Student Advisor. Candidates are required to provide evidence of the event leading to the request, a statement from the supervisor and the approval of the Associate Dean (PGR) in the home Faculty. Copies of Master’s thesis academic progress reports will also be required.

(c) Scholarship holders must inform the Scholarships Office of any changes in their enrolment status.

   Note: Variations to registration may not be possible in some structured cohort-based programmes.

4.2.3 Suspension of study

(a) On application from a candidate, the Associate Dean (PGR) may grant a period of suspension measured in monthly increments up to a total of three months. During a suspension a candidate will pay no fees and will have no access to University services.

(b) Suspensions beyond a total of three months, or for reasons other than those specified above (see 4.2.2 (a)), must be approved by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR).

(c) The total period of suspension shall not usually exceed twelve months, irrespective of whether a candidate is full-time or half-time.

   Note: International candidates are advised to check their visa conditions if applying for a suspension.

(d) Retrospective suspensions are granted only in exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the Dean (FGR). Applications should be made within two months of the event which gives rise to the claim for a retrospective suspension.
4.2.4 Extension to the due date

(a) On application from a candidate, the Associate Dean (PGR) may grant up to three months extension to the time for completion of the thesis on any of the grounds in 4.2.2 (a). A request for an extension must be accompanied by a detailed plan for completion of the thesis within the time requested.

(b) Associate Deans (PGR) will report annually to the Faculty of Graduate Research Board on the number of extensions granted and the reasons for granting them.

4.2.5 Change of status from full-time to half-time and half-time to full-time

(a) Applications must be approved by the Associate Dean (PGR) who may require supporting documentation.

(b) Relevant grounds for changing to half-time status may include the health of the candidate or a member of the candidate’s immediate family, or the demands of full-time employment.

Note 1: Scholarship holders who are contemplating a change to half-time status must consider the conditions of their scholarship.

Note 2: International candidates are advised to check their visa conditions if applying for half-time status.

4.2.6 Termination of enrolment

(a) The Associate Dean (PGR) may, on the recommendation of the School Research Committee, terminate a candidate’s enrolment in the following circumstances:

(i) If the candidate has not had a research proposal approved by the School Research Committee within three months of registration for the thesis (see s4.3.2 below);

(ii) If the candidate fails to make satisfactory progress during the programme, including failure to satisfy any mandatory requirements within a research portfolio (see s4.8 and s4.9 (g)); or

(iii) If the candidate does not submit the thesis for examination within the specified timeframe.

(b) A candidate who has been notified of termination on the grounds in s4.2.6(a) (iii) above may appeal against termination, or to pre-empt termination, to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research. Applications must be made in writing and show that extraordinary circumstances apply.

(c) A candidate whose enrolment is terminated may apply for a fees reconsideration.

4.2.7 Withdrawal from the programme

A candidate may withdraw from a Master’s thesis before submitting the work for examination, by informing the home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office in writing of the intention to withdraw.

4.3 Defining the programme of study

4.3.1 Research portfolio outline

(a) All candidates enrolled in a research portfolio must be provided with a portfolio outline prior to the commencement of their registration.

Note: Research portfolio candidates are identified by the course code under which they are enrolled.
(b) The portfolio outline must detail all aspects of the management and delivery of the programme that diverge from the normal thesis processes and requirements. These may include:

(i) Any alternative arrangements for the content, timing or format of the research proposal (see 4.3.2).

(ii) The structure of the programme, including any scheduled seminars, workshops, presentations or other sessions that the candidate is expected to attend;

(iii) Whether any of the provisions in s4.2 for suspension, extension or half-time enrolment do not apply;

(iv) The structure and timelines for assessment unless based on a single final submission;

(v) Any penalties that will be applied to late submission of assessed work scheduled within the 12 month registration period;

(vi) Any mandatory requirements that, if failed, would be grounds for termination (see s4.9(g));

(vii) Any group work and/or group assessment (see s4.9 (e)-(f));

(viii) Any requirements about the nature of the work;

(ix) Arrangements for monitoring progress (see s4.8);

(x) Assessment criteria;

(xi) Submission and examination processes (see s4.10.5);

(xii) Requirements for the format of the final submission(s), including the material that is to be submitted in the Library (see s4.9(c)).

(c) The portfolio outline must be endorsed by the Head of School and the relevant Associate Dean, and approved by the Dean FGR. Copies must be lodged in the home Faculty Student Administration and Academic Services Office and with FGR.

(d) Any changes to the portfolio outline after it has been distributed to enrolled candidates require consultation with candidates and approval by the Associate Dean. Any significant changes must also be approved by the Dean FGR. An updated version must be lodged in the home Faculty Student Administration and Academic Services Office and with FGR.

(e) A copy of the portfolio outline must be made available to all examiners.

4.3.2 Research proposal

(a) Within one month of registration for the thesis the candidate must submit a research proposal which details the aim of the thesis project, methods of study, ethical considerations and resource requirements.

(i) If a non-standard format is anticipated, the research proposal should also indicate the proposed format in which the work will be submitted.

Note : Guidelines setting out the standard print formats for theses are available on the Library website http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/using-library/submit-your-thesis/formats-theses

(ii) If the candidate is enrolled in a research portfolio and the research portfolio outline provides for significant group work, the research proposal should detail the candidate’s involvement.
(b) The research proposal will not normally exceed 5 pages or 2,500 words. If a School routinely requires a longer proposal, this must be approved by the Faculty of Graduate Research (FGR) Board.

(c) The School Research Committee will scrutinise the research proposal and make a recommendation to the Head of School on whether:
   (i) the designated supervisor is appropriately experienced in the field of research;
   (ii) the scope of the proposed research is appropriate for the thesis; and
   (iii) any proposed non-standard format is appropriate, and has been discussed with the Librarian.

(d) The Head of School is also required to ensure that adequate resources are available to support the research.

(e) The Head of School (or nominee) will provide written feedback on the research proposal to the candidate advising one of the following outcomes:
   (i) approval of the proposal; or
   (ii) conditional approval with a timeframe for meeting the specified conditions for modifying the proposal; or
   (iii) proposal not approved.

(f) If the research proposal is approved with a non-standard format, the Head of School will provide a written authorisation for the candidate to provide to the Library upon submission of the thesis.

(g) Associate Deans (PGR) must monitor compliance with the time for submitting the research proposal, and report annually to the FGR Board.

(h) A research portfolio outline may specify alternative arrangements for ensuring the issues in 4.3.2(a)-(g) are appropriately addressed and documented.

### 4.4 Research Memorandum and Assessment of Resources

Where the required resources for the approved research project exceed the Minimum Resources Agreement a specific memorandum should be signed by all parties. This memorandum is an agreement between the student, the supervisor and the Head of School about the resources to be provided by the University, including laboratory and experimental apparatus, fieldwork support, particular library resources, information technology services, and any other special arrangements. This memorandum, which commits the School to providing the agreed funding, shall form part of the candidate’s record in the School, with a copy to the home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office.

### 4.5 Attendance at the University

(a) It is expected that candidates will attend the University regularly. Any variation to this requires the approval of the Associate Dean (PGR) at the time of enrolment or when circumstances change. If significant elements of the project are to be undertaken off campus this must also be approved by the Associate Dean (PGR).

(b) Arrangements for maintaining regular contact with, and reporting to, the supervisor during approved periods away from the University must be agreed and clearly documented.
4.6 External party involvement

Where an external party is involved in the candidature:

(i) the relationship must be made the subject of an agreement between the University, the student and the external party before the project commences. This agreement will address issues relevant to the relationship and having a bearing on the expectation and obligations of the parties concerned. It will also establish the terms and conditions under which it is intended that the project proceed;

(ii) any agreement must comply with the Management of External Research Consultancy and Related Contracts Policy or any policy that supersedes that document, and the Intellectual Property Policy;

(iii) the agreement should include provision for revisiting the agreed terms during the project;

(iv) the agreement and any revision of it should be monitored as part of the process for evaluation and monitoring progress set out in s4.8.

Note: If supervisory arrangements involve an external party, refer to s4.7.2 (c) below.

4.7 Supervision and support of candidates

4.7.1 Oversight of candidature

The Head of School (or nominee) has oversight of all Master’s thesis candidates in the School, may be involved in the School Research Committee’s consideration of research proposals and will sign off on the Master’s thesis academic progress reports.

4.7.2 Appointment of Supervisors

(a) Each candidate will work under the guidance of at least one supervisor appointed on behalf of the University by the Head of School. At least one supervisor must be a professor or lecturer of the University in the sense of the Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961, which should be understood as including senior lecturers, readers and associate professors.

(b) Exceptionally, people holding appointments such as research fellows or research associates may act as supervisors provided that they have been approved by the Associate Dean (PGR) to supervise a specific thesis.

(c) If it is appropriate for a scholar or senior practitioner from outside the University to be involved in the supervisory team, they will be appointed, on the recommendation of the Head of School and Associate Dean (PGR), as an Honorary Research Associate, by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research.

(d) A supervisor should have no other significant personal, professional or contractual relationship with the candidate.

(e) The Head of School should ensure that appropriate supervision arrangements are in place if the primary supervisor is absent from the University for any period longer than one month.

4.7.3 Qualifications and Training of Supervisors

(a) Only those academic staff with a Master’s thesis degree or doctorate in an appropriate subject area and/or evidence of an established research record should undertake the primary supervision of students and then only if they have appropriate experience or training. Heads of School have responsibility for ensuring that only qualified staff members gain approval as thesis supervisors and for advising staff to complete a professional development programme for supervisors.
(b) External supervisors should be invited to participate in an appropriate development programme as part of their appointment and should complete this as soon as possible after agreeing to serve in a supervisory capacity.

4.7.4 Supervisors’ Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of supervisors is to assist candidates to complete the research within an agreed time frame as outlined in s4.9 (h). This includes taking reasonable steps, consistent with available resources, to:

(i) provide a framework within which the academic work can take place;
(ii) provide academic guidance;
(iii) provide appropriate and timely feedback;
(iv) assess progress;
(v) facilitate administrative compliance;
(vi) act as a guide to University facilities;
(vii) guide the candidate to identify other relevant expertise to progress the research;
(viii) encourage the candidate to participate in University intellectual life and develop professional contacts outside the University; and
(ix) identify potential examiners and recommend their appointment to the Head of School well in advance of the thesis being submitted for examination.

Note: Refer to Supervisors’ Responsibilities for details.

4.7.5 Candidates’ Responsibilities

Completing a Master’s thesis programme requires progressive development of skills, competence and confidence. Candidates must take responsibility for independently pursuing their studies with the guidance of their supervisor in a manner which develops their own intellectual independence. This includes taking reasonable steps, consistent with available resources, to:

(i) plan and actively pursue the research;
(ii) identify and deal with any research-related problems ;
(iii) comply with administrative requirements;
(iv) meet ethical guidelines;
(v) except as set out in the relevant portfolio outline (see s4.3.1), give at least one month’s notice to their supervisor of their intention to submit;

Note: The submission date for research portfolios may be set by the School.

(vi) take responsibility for the final form of the thesis; and
(vii) participate in University intellectual life.

Note: Refer to Candidates’ Responsibilities for details.

4.8 Evaluating and Monitoring Progress

(a) Supervisors are responsible for evaluating and monitoring a candidate’s academic progress. They should provide adequate and timely written feedback on all submitted work. If any doubt arises as to the ability of a candidate to complete the research this must be raised and dealt with as soon as is practicable for the benefit of both the candidate and the University.
(b) Supervisors must keep a record of formal supervisory meetings and record any significant advice or transactions that are not dealt with in the academic progress reports as set out in s4.8(c) – (f).

(c) Except as provided in s4.8(f), a Master’s thesis academic progress report will be completed at the end of the third month of registration to ensure that the candidate is making adequate progress, and that the supervisory relationship and any external party arrangements are working well. Any issues or concerns will be addressed by the Head of School (HoS), or nominee. At eight months a more substantial Master’s thesis academic progress report will be completed, reviewed by the Head of School and forwarded to the Associate Dean (PGR).

\[\text{Note: Templates for the three-month academic progress report and the eight-month report are available on the FGR website } \text{http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fgr/policies-and-resources/forms}.\]

(d) The Head of School will initiate the academic progress reporting process of the candidates for whom they have responsibility, but the writing of the report is the joint responsibility of the supervisor and the candidate. The candidate and supervisor will see and acknowledge each other’s comments in the reports. Any identified problems and proposed methods of addressing them should be discussed with the candidate before the report is finalised. A copy must be provided to the candidate and the original report held on their file in the home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office.

(e) The Master’s thesis academic progress reports provide an opportunity for candidates to comment on the quality of their supervision. Candidates can raise any issue in confidence with the Postgraduate Coordinator, Head of School or Associate Dean (PGR) at any time.

(f) On the recommendation of the Head of School, the Associate Dean (PGR) may approve an alternative arrangement to the 3-month and 8-month reports for candidates undertaking a research portfolio. Any such arrangement must:

(i) be detailed in the portfolio outline;

(ii) provide at least an equivalent level of monitoring, evaluation and documentation of the candidate’s progress; and

(iii) include a requirement for the candidate to provide comment and raise any concerns.

4.9 The Thesis or Research Portfolio

(a) A thesis is the outcome of independent research, scholarship or creative activity conducted under supervision.

(b) The length of a 120 point thesis or research portfolio will be appropriate to the discipline and must not exceed 40,000 words, including bibliography, footnotes or endnotes and essential appendices, unless specific permission has been granted by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research. The length of a 90-point thesis will be correspondingly shorter.

(c) Theses may be submitted and assessed in te reo Māori provided the candidate has sought and been granted prior approval from the Dean FGR. Theses to be examined in te reo Māori must be written in, not translated into, to re Māori.

(d) Candidates may submit a thesis in a language other than English or Māori only after permission has been granted by the Dean FGR. Such permission should be sought at the earliest opportunity and must be determined within one month of initial registration; permission will only be given if the use of the language is an essential element of the research and examiners can be appointed who will examine in that language.
For works of design, creation or performance, the candidate should include a written commentary on the work which is appropriately balanced with the creative component.

Note: Guidelines setting out the standard print formats for theses are available on the Library website http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/using-library/submit-your-thesis/formats-theses

The format of a research portfolio is specified by the Head of School, and communicated to candidates in the portfolio outline. The format must be appropriate to the discipline and to the points value involved. It may comprise one or more pieces of work. Where non-text-based material is included, the Librarian should be consulted on arrangements for lodging a record of the work in the Library before the required format is finalised.

Up to 15% of the assessment within a research portfolio may be based on group work where students work collaboratively to explore and develop ideas and solutions to problems, but submit individual work. In exceptional circumstances, where justified by the nature of the discipline, the Dean FGR may approve up to 75% of the work being undertaken in a group context if satisfied that the level of dependency between the candidates’ work will not jeopardise individual candidate’s success. Such approval must be obtained prior to approval of the research portfolio outline.

Up to 15% of the assessment within a research portfolio may be group assessment where all members of the group contribute to a single piece of assessed work, and all receive the same assessment outcome.

Within a research portfolio specified mandatory requirements may be associated with the evaluation of progress (see s4.8)

Note: Failure to satisfy mandatory requirements may be grounds for termination (s4.2.6)

A candidate pursuing a course of study for a thesis or research portfolio is expected to complete the work and submit it for examination within twelve months of full-time (or equivalent) registration, unless an extension has been approved (see s4.2.4).

Where there are cogent and compelling reasons why a thesis or research portfolio should not be publicly available for a given limited period, and where these are known at any time before submission of the work for examination, the candidate should apply to the Dean FGR for permission to have access withheld at the outset of the research or as soon as the need for an embargo is apparent. The work may be withheld for a maximum of two years. (See the Withholding of Theses Procedure).

4.10 Examination

4.10.1 Appointment of Examiners

A thesis or research portfolio is examined by at least two examiners who must have standing in the field of the thesis and must normally have experience of Master's supervision and examination.

A least one examiner must be an external examiner, usually a member of the staff of another university or similar institution. For a research portfolio the external examiner may be selected on the basis of extensive experience in the relevant profession at a senior level.

The other examiner (the internal examiner) will be a member of the Victoria University staff

Examiners must be in a position to provide a fair and impartial assessment of the work. Suitable examiners are those who have no significant personal, professional or contractual relationships with the candidate or a close relationship with the supervisor, and who have not been involved in supervising the work. In cases where the most qualified prospective examiner has such a relationship, the appointment must be approved by the Dean FGR.
Prospective examiners should be approached informally by the supervisor or Head of School well in advance of the expected submission of the work. 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, unless undertaking a research portfolio, must not be told which examiners have been nominated or appointed.

The Head of School, after appropriate consultation, shall recommend examiners to the Associate Dean (PGR) who will, if satisfied, endorse this recommendation. The Head of School is required to provide to the Associate Dean (PGR) a brief curriculum vitae for the external examiner.

4.10.2 Thesis submission

Note: See s4.10.5 for provisions relating to the submission of a research portfolio.

(a) A candidate must be registered for at least one month immediately preceding submission.

(b) The decision to make an application for a thesis to be examined shall be made by the candidate after consultation with the supervisor. However, the University has an obligation to examiners to take reasonable steps to ensure that any thesis sent for examination is complete and otherwise suitable for examination.

(c) A thesis is not complete unless it constitutes an independent scholarly work inclusive of all scholarly apparatus usual in the discipline. This includes an abstract, a table of contents and a reference list. It should be presented in a form regarded as suitable for examination in the discipline concerned, including being expressed in appropriate and accurate language, and it should conform to all other formal requirements of the University for the presentation of a thesis, including word limits (see s4.9).

(d) To facilitate library cataloguing, theses submitted in any language other than English may include an English translation of the title page and abstract.

(e) Theses submitted in any language must consistently meet the formal standards of presentation of written work (e.g. grammar, spelling, style) in that language.

(f) When the candidate indicates the thesis is ready to be submitted it should be reviewed by the supervisor before application is made for examination. This review period should not usually exceed two weeks.

(g) The home Faculty may determine not to send out for an examination any thesis which fails to meet the conditions in (c) above. The Associate Dean (PGR) will notify the candidate if this is the case.

(h) The candidate shall submit two printed copies and one electronic copy of the thesis to the home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office and apply for examination. The candidate must also submit the following documents:

(i) a signed “Statement of Authorship” form to confirm that the work of others has been acknowledged in the thesis and that the thesis has not been submitted previously for another degree;

(ii) a signed “Availability of Thesis” form to indicate that the thesis may be consulted, borrowed, copied or reproduced in accordance with the Library regulations. Such consent may be delayed if the candidate has received the approval of the Dean FGR to have access to the thesis withheld for a limited given period of time (see the Withholding of Theses Procedure).

(iii) a “Thesis Supervisor’s Statement” form signed by the supervisor certifying that the candidate has pursued the research in accordance with the requirements of the
relevant statutes and indicating what part the supervisor played in the preparation of the thesis.

(i) Candidates must ensure that any holds they may have incurred on their student account during their candidature are cleared with Student Finance in order for the examination process to proceed.

(j) On submission of the thesis, the home Faculty Advisor will give the candidate an Exit Survey Form. Completed surveys are submitted anonymously to the Faculty of Graduate Research and aggregated results made available to the Associate Dean (PGR).

4.10.3 Thesis Examination Process

Note: See s4.10.5 for provisions relating to the examination of a research portfolio.

(a) The examination comprises an expert assessment of the thesis by the examiners (see s4.10.1 (a)-(d) above).

(b) The home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office will send a copy of the thesis to each examiner along with specific details of what is required by the home Faculty (details may vary from Faculty to Faculty).

(c) Theses submitted in te reo Māori are not to be translated into English or any other language for the purposes of examination.

(d) Consultation between examiners, or between an examiner and the candidate or the supervisor, is prohibited until the reports have been submitted to the Associate Dean (PGR).

(e) Examiners must submit a written report to the Associate Dean (PGR) in the home Faculty. The examiner's name will be attached to their report and after the grade has been determined, the reports will be released to the candidate and the supervisor. If an examiner wishes to make confidential comments, these should be contained in a separate document.

(f) Each examiner is required to provide a written report on the thesis and to recommend a grade. The possible grades and the associated percentage ranges are set out in the Assessment Handbook.

Note: For particular Master's degrees, some Faculties may request a mark as well as a grade

(g) Where the thesis is the sole piece of assessed work for a degree which can be awarded with distinction or merit, the grades are set out in the relevant section of the Personal Courses of Study Statute.

(h) The grade for the thesis is for the document as it is submitted for examination. A requirement for editorial changes (refer to the Editorial Advice Policy) may be a condition of deposit of the thesis in the University Library but has no effect on the grade awarded.

(i) Where the thesis does not meet the requisite standards, the examiners may recommend that the thesis be revised and resubmitted for a second examination (see s4.10.6).

(j) The Associate Dean (PGR) will forward the examiners’ reports to the Convener of the School Research Committee for a recommendation as to the outcome of the process.

4.10.4 Determining the Final Grade for a Thesis

Note: See s4.10.5 for provisions relating to a research portfolio.

(a) The School Research Committee (SRC) will review the examiners’ reports and recommend an outcome of the examination to the Associate Dean (PGR).

(b) Where the examiners are in agreement the SRC will usually accept their recommendation.
(c) Where the examiners are not in agreement the SRC will discuss the grade and either ask the examiners to come to an agreement as to the final grade or, if the examiners cannot do this, institute some process for arriving at a decision which must involve:

(i) requesting a report from the supervisor in the light of the examiners’ reports to help resolve any disagreement;

and may also involve:

(ii) consulting with the relevant Associate Dean (PGR);

(iii) consulting with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research;

(iv) asking an external referee to adjudicate.

(d) Where the final grade is not obviously explained by the examiners’ reports, the SRC must arrange for a document explaining any apparent contradictions to be written by the examiners or by the SRC.

(e) The SRC will make a recommendation to the Associate Dean (PGR) as to the final grade for the examination. Where examiners have recommended editorial changes to the thesis prior to deposit in the University Library, the SRC may make the completion of such changes a condition for the awarding of the degree, and shall arrange for the changes to be checked and approved by an appropriate person.

(f) On the basis of the SRC’s recommendation the Associate Dean (PGR) determines the final grade for the thesis and will:

(i) communicate the result to the candidate, and send the candidate copies of the examiners’ reports and/or any additional report as in (d) above; and

(ii) send copies of the examiners’ reports (if these have not already been distributed) and/or any additional report as in (d) above, and the result to the supervisor(s); and

(iii) inform the examiners of the outcome of the examination.

(g) Candidates who wish to appeal the grade and/or award they have received, should do so in writing to the Associate Dean (PGR), detailing why they believe the grade and/or award to be unjust. Under such circumstances, the Associate Dean will request the SRC to reconsider the examination reports, and the recommendations from the examiners in the light of the issues raised by the candidate. The SRC must also request a written report from the supervisor(s).

(h) The SRC makes a recommendation to the Associate Dean (PGR) on whether there should be any change to the grade and/or award, or may recommend that the thesis be sent out to a referee. The basis for the SRC recommendation should be set out in writing.

(i) The Associate Dean (PGR) makes the final decision on the appeal and informs the candidate, supervisor and examiners.

(j) A candidate who is dissatisfied with the manner in which the examination or any appeal under (g) above was conducted may make a further appeal, in writing, to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research. The Dean can consider only matters of procedure.

4.10.5 Research Portfolio Submission and Examination Process

(a) The home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office is responsible for managing processes for the submission and examination of a research portfolio. This includes ensuring that the candidate submits relevant “Statement of Authorship”, “Availability of Thesis” and “Thesis Supervisors’ Statement” documents as set out in s.4.10.2(f). Where appropriate, the Associate
Dean PGR may delegate responsibility for management of individual items of assessment to the Head of School.

(b) The majority of the work must be assessed by at least two examiners, including at least one external examiner.

Note: All examiners must be provided with a copy of the portfolio outline (see s4.3.1)

(c) Examiners may assess the work independently and provide separate examiner’s reports and recommended grades, or one or more examination panels may be established to assess the work and provide a written report and an agreed recommended grade.

(d) The School Research Committee (SRC) will review all examiner’s reports and recommended grades as set out in s4.10.4(b) – (e), and recommend an overall grade for the research portfolio to the Associate Dean (PGR).

(i) The possible grades and the associated percentage ranges are set out in the Assessment Handbook.

(ii) Where examiners have recommended editorial changes to the work prior to deposit in the University Library, the SRC may make the completion of such changes a condition for the awarding of the degree, and shall arrange for the changes to be checked and approved by an appropriate person.

(iii) Where the work does not meet the requisite standards, the examiners’ may recommend that aspects of it be revised and resubmitted for a second examination (see s4.10.6)

(e) On the basis of the SRC’s recommendation the Associate Dean (PGR) determines the final grade for the research portfolio. The Associate Dean (or nominee) will:

(i) communicate the result to the candidate, the examiners and the supervisor; and

(ii) except where these have already been distributed, provide the candidate and the supervisor with copies of the examiner’s reports and/or any additional reports considered or developed by SRC,

(f) Appeal processes are as for a thesis (see s4.10.4(g) and (j)).

4.10.6 Resubmission for second examination

(a) The candidate will be informed of the extent of the necessary corrections and revisions, and given a timeframe for resubmitting the work for examination. This will not normally exceed six months, irrespective of whether the candidate is registered on a full-time or half-time basis.

(b) Resubmission entails a further period of supervision and registration. Except with the permission of the Dean PGR, a candidate must be registered within three months of being notified of the examination decision and must be registered until they submit the work for second examination.

(c) The work will be examined by the same examiners unless there are exceptional circumstances.

(d) Only three grades may be awarded: C-, D or E.

(e) The option of resubmission is available only once; this must be made clear to examiners marking resubmitted work.

(f) No candidate may gain first or second class honours or distinction or merit (as appropriate for the degree for which the work has been submitted) for any degree for which the thesis or research portfolio has been resubmitted.
4.11 Deposit of the Thesis or Research Portfolio in the Library

Where the decision has been made that the degree is to be awarded, copies of the final work are lodged in the University Library in accordance with the Library Statute. The home Faculty Student and Academic Services Office is responsible for ensuring that the candidate has deposited the required copies in the Library. A copy of the receipt for this must be forwarded to the Faculty Student and Academic Services Office before the degree can be conferred.

Note: See s.4.9 for the approval process for a non-standard format.

4.12 Conversion from a Master’s Thesis Degree to a PhD Degree

(a) A student who has not submitted their Master’s thesis for examination may apply to convert their enrolment from a Master’s thesis degree into a PhD degree. An application (see s.4.12(g) below) must have support from the current supervisor/s. A conversion must occur before the Master’s thesis is submitted, and must be finalised within 11 months of registration for the thesis; exceptions require the approval of the relevant Associate Dean (PGR).

Note: A Research Portfolio cannot normally be converted to a PhD. Any such a conversion must be approved by the Dean FGR – see s.4.12(f).

(b) The supervisor/s must:

(i) indicate that the topic can be extended in a manner suitable to provide a PhD project; and

(ii) confirm that the candidate has demonstrated the aptitude and level of competence required for PhD study, including English language proficiency.

(c) The supervisor/s and the candidate must agree in writing the additional work to be undertaken and this document must be submitted with the application.

(d) The School Research Committee (SRC) must also approve the application. It must, in consultation with the Head of School, confirm:

(i) that the candidate is a suitable candidate to be transferred to a PhD; and

(ii) that the project can be extended in a manner suitable to provide a PhD project; and

(iii) that adequate supervision is available, with an indication of who the new supervisory team will be (the supervisor/s of the Master’s thesis will not necessarily remain on the PhD supervisory team); and

(iv) that adequate resources to support the proposed PhD research project are available.

(e) If the SRC is unable to recommend acceptance of the application to convert, it should so inform the candidate, explaining why. The decision of the SRC not to confirm a conversion is final.

(f) Final approval of a conversion is by the Associate Dean (PGR), except that conversion from a research portfolio requires approval by the Dean FGR.

(g) The candidate is not required to fill in a Doctoral Admission form. Application information and approvals are recorded on the School/Faculty PhD Approval Form – Upgrade from Master’s form

(h) Applications may be considered outside of the three standard application rounds for doctoral study.

(i) If candidates wish to be considered for a Victoria Doctoral Scholarship they must submit an application for consideration in a subsequent scholarship round.
(j) The date of first enrolment for the Master's degree becomes the date of provisional registration for the PhD.

(k) Candidates who convert from a Master's degree to a PhD degree are required to satisfy all requirements for full registration, including the submission of a full proposal for the PhD.

4.13 Powers of the Dean FGR in respect of this policy

(a) Where the Dean FGR is convinced that any regulation or procedure would lead to injustice for a particular candidate, the Dean may, after consultation with appropriate parties, modify the application of the relevant clause for the individual case.

(b) Where the examination process is compromised the Dean FGR has the right to declare an examination null and void and recommence the examination process.

4.14 Academic Grievance

Any concerns relating to academic disadvantage regarding a candidate's Master's thesis or research portfolio programme are dealt with under the Academic Grievance Policy.

5 Legislative Compliance

The University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework. The legislation directing this policy is the:

Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961.

6 References

Academic Grievance Policy
Animal Ethics Policy
Assessment Handbook
Awarding of Qualifications Posthumously Policy
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Statute
Details of Candidates' Responsibilities
Details of Supervisors' Responsibilities
Editorial Advice Policy
Fees Statute
Human Ethics Policy
Intellectual Property Policy
Library Statute
Management of External Research Consultancy and Related Contracts Policy
Master's Thesis Academic Progress Report Templates
Minimum Resources Agreement
Personal Courses of Study Statute
Recognition of Authorship Policy
Research Proposal Template
Withholding of Theses Procedure
7 Appendices
None

8 Approval Agency
Academic Board

9 Approval Dates
This policy was originally approved on: 31 August 2006
This version was approved on: 17 November 2015
This version takes effect from: 17 November 2015

10 Policy Sponsor
Provost

11 Contact Person
The following person may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:
Dr Theresa Sawicka
Manager FGR
Ext 5190