

Whānau Information Sheet

Postgraduate Studies

Student and Academic Services Division
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WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

The oral examination of Doctoral Candidates

The oral examination is the final and key part of the Doctoral examination process. It is a time when the candidate can demonstrate his/her knowledge and understanding of the discipline or field of study, the appropriateness of the research methodologies and methods of analysis, and the validity of the conclusions. It is also an opportunity for the examiners to clarify any matters or sections of the thesis that they consider unclear and to discuss with the candidate amendments which need to be made in order to make the thesis acceptable for final submission and award of the degree. The University of Waikato supports the presences of whānau and have written the following guidelines to help support persons have a better understanding of the examination process.

Attendees of the oral examination

The **Candidate** attends the examination to defend their thesis and demonstrate how their research makes a substantial original contribution to the subject area.

The **Convenor** is a senior academic staff member of the University who has been appointed by the Postgraduate Research Committee to chair the oral examination. The Convenor is not an examiner; they are there to ensure the examination is conducted in a fair and proper manner. The Convenor controls the examination and invites people to speak when appropriate.

The **Examiner** is eminent and a widely respected specialist in their research field who is external to the University and not directly connected to the candidate or the candidate's research. They have been appointed by the Postgraduate Research Committee to examine the candidates thesis and give a recommendation of whether the work is worthy of the degree.

The **Chief Supervisor** is an academic staff member of the University who has been the candidates' main academic adviser throughout their candidature. The Chief Supervisor will be a key participant in the oral examination, by supporting the candidate and ensuring they fully understand the questions and requests of revision by the examiner(s).

Other members of the **Supervisory Panel** may also attend the oral examination. These are second and third supervisors to the candidate, who although have played a lesser role in the supervision, will have had valuable input at certain stages of the research and/or write up. The Supervisory Panel members will be at the oral examination in a support capacity to the candidate.

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Format of the oral examination

Before opening the examination, the Convenor will introduce themselves and the other exam attendees to the whānau, they will give a brief overview of the format the examination will follow and answer any questions the whānau have. The whānau need to indicate to the Convenor who their representative will be to respond to the Convenor's mihi. The whānau must nominate only one person to speak on their behalf.

The Convenor will open the examination with a mihi and then invite the whānau representative to give a brief response. A karakia will then be said to formally open the oral examination proceedings.

Each oral examination may vary slightly depending on the subject area but will normally follow the format outlined below:

- A brief overview of the thesis by the candidate
- Questions from the examiners on the substantive issues communicated to the candidate beforehand; and
- Other questions and free discussion

Once the oral examination is complete the candidate and all whānau will be asked to leave the room while the examiner considers their final recommendation for the Postgraduate Research Committee. Once a decision has been reached, the candidate and whānau will be invited back into the room to hear the recommendation and for a closing karakia. All attendees will then be invited to celebrate, usually with kai, which will be arranged in advance by the Chief Supervisor.

Role of whānau

The role of whānau is to act as silent support to the candidate. The Convenor will invite the whānau representative to speak at the appropriate time before the oral examination proceedings begin. It is important to remember that this is a formal examination required by the University of Waikato and once the oral examination has started all whānau and support people must remain quiet so the examination can flow uninterrupted.