

Processes for MEng/MEngSc (Research)

*Faculty of Engineering
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1 Definitions and General Requirements

This document should be read as setting the minimum standards regarding MEng/MEngSc (Research) processes in the faculty. Note that in this document, the following definitions hold:

1.1 Special Cases

It should be understood that this document cannot make provision for all possible special circumstances. For deviations from the procedures in this document, applications may be always made to the Vice-Dean (Research & Industry Liaison), via the Departmental Management Committee, for approval by the Dean and Vice-Deans.

1.2 Postgraduate Coordinator

It should be understood that the Postgraduate Coordinator (PC) can, with approval from the Departmental Chair, appoint a designated person to take over some responsibilities. This is required in cases of conflicts of interest. In the case when the PC is a supervisor or internal examiner of a specific candidate, the Departmental Chair must appoint a suitable person.

1.3 Supervisor's Report

(from 5.5.1.4 in Part 1 of the General Yearbook)

The supervisor(s) may compile a report in order to provide the assessment panel that has to assess the examiners' reports, with insight into the course of the process that culminated in the production of the thesis. The following aspects could be included in the report:

- The context in which the study was undertaken;
- The methodological setup according to which the study was undertaken and within which the study should be assessed;
- To what extent the student worked independently;
- Problems experienced by the student with regard to the collection of information;
- Any other aspect that could have implications for the final assessment of and allocation of a mark for the thesis, particularly if a pass with distinction is a possibility.

If the supervisor(s) chooses to submit a report, the report must be submitted to the Postgraduate Coordinator together with the Supervisor Declaration, which is required before a thesis/dissertation can be sent to examiners. The report is only made available to the examination committee after the examiners have submitted their own reports, including recommendations regarding the final mark to be allocated.

2 Application and Registration

- 2.1.1 Stellenbosch final year students apply formally using the different departmental application forms.
- 2.1.2 Outside students apply through the main Stellenbosch University online process, as well as the different departmental application forms.
- 2.1.3 Once accepted, students can register following normal university procedures.

3 Registration after Maximum Allowed Time

- 3.1.1 Master's students who do not complete their programmes within the maximum permissible period of registration, are automatically admitted for a final concessional year. In June, and again in November, of the final concessional year, they are informed via email by the Faculty Administrator that they will not be able to automatically register for the next academic year. The maximum permissible time frames are:
- MEng/MEngSc(Research) full-time 2 years
 - MEng/MEngSc(Research) part-time 4 years
- 3.1.2 The same process as is described in the document *Procedure - PhD Processes* for registration after the maximum allowed time, is followed.

4 Examination Procedures

4.1 Appointment of Examiners

The same procedures as in the document *Procedure - PhD Processes* are followed.

4.2 Upgrade to PhD

The Faculty of Engineering makes provision for the MEng/MEngSc(Research) to be upgraded to a PhD under very specific conditions. For details, see the document *Procedure – PhD Processes*.

4.3 Submission of Thesis

The same procedures as in the document *Procedure - PhD Processes* are followed, with all instances of *dissertation* replaced by *thesis*.

4.4 Distribution of Thesis

The same procedures as in the document *Procedure - PhD Processes* are followed, with all instances of *dissertation* replaced by *thesis*, and the form *PG04-M Examiner Report*, is used.

4.5 Receipt of Thesis Evaluation Reports

The same procedures as in the document *Procedure - PhD Processes* are followed, with all instances of *dissertation* replaced by *thesis*.

4.6 Examination

- 4.6.1 The Examination Commission consists of a chairperson (appointed by the Postgraduate Coordinator as mentioned above) and all the examiners.
- 4.6.2 It is the prerogative of the supervisor(s) to submit a Supervisor's Report together with the Supervisor Declaration form, to the designated departmental postgraduate officer, which can include any aspect that could have implications for the final assessment (see Definition above, 5.5.1.4 in the Postgraduate Qualifications chapter of the Calendar Part 1). Such a report ensures that the supervisor(s) has the right to appeal if there are serious objections to the official results.
- 4.6.3 An oral presentation by the candidate is required in all cases. A public presentation, covering a substantial part of the candidate's research (for example presenting a paper at a conference or workshop), may however be recognised as fulfilling this requirement. Such a presentation may also be combined with an oral examination.
- 4.6.4 By the due date for the examination reports, the candidate must have submitted a copy of a journal or conference paper on the research. It is the prerogative of the supervisor(s) to send

the article to a journal for publication or to hold it back. In the case of a thesis being classified as SECRET, the option that the journal article be sent off is no longer valid.

- 4.6.5 The Postgraduate Coordinator decides on the basis of all the available information (including the reports of the examiners) whether an oral examination can be waived. In such a case, this recommendation is proposed to the supervisor(s), together with the marks awarded by the examiners. If the supervisor(s) concurs, the procedure is followed for determining the mark without an oral examination. An oral examination is, however, always required in any of the following cases:
- Any examiner recommends a failing mark.
 - The supervisor had requested the work be considered for an upgrade to a PhD.
 - No consensus can be reached by the examiners regarding a final mark.
 - The Departmental Management Committee requests an oral examination.
- 4.6.6 In the case where an oral examination is required, the following procedure is followed:
- 4.6.6.1 The Examination Commission must be represented by the chairperson, the internal examiner, and at least one of the external examiners. An examiner that is available via telephone, Skype, or a similar connection, is acceptable and he/she is regarded as being present.
- 4.6.6.2 If an external examiner cannot be present, he/she can provide the chairperson with a list of questions, and the chairperson will in turn present these questions to the candidate.
- 4.6.6.3 The candidate must be present in person.
- 4.6.6.4 The chairperson is in possession of all the examiners' evaluation reports and recommendations.
- 4.6.6.5 The candidate has the opportunity to deliver a presentation (typically 20 to 30 minutes) on his/her research. This presentation is open to the public and general questions may be posed to the candidate at the end of his/her presentation. If a public presentation had taken place at a prior time, or if the thesis is classified as SECRET, the Postgraduate Coordinator may waive this requirement.
- 4.6.6.6 In case the presentation and the examination process follow directly after one another, the general public is excused, and only the members of the Examination Commission, the supervisor(s), and the candidate remain for the formal examination process.
- 4.6.6.7 If applicable, the chairperson informs the examiners that the evaluation will include the possibility of an upgrade to PhD.
- 4.6.6.8 The chairperson now facilitates the candidate's examination by the examiners. The supervisor(s) does not participate in the question session, but may be present.
- 4.6.6.9 At the end of the question session, and after the candidate has been excused, the supervisor(s) is given the opportunity to put the candidate's research into context with regards to aspects such as workload, autonomy, unique contributions, etc. and his/her perception of the quality of the work. The report of the supervisor(s), if submitted, is now presented by the chairperson and is considered by the Examination Commission. (5.5.2 in Calendar)
- 4.6.6.10 The supervisor(s) is now excused and the chairperson attempts to reach consensus with regards to the final outcome.
- 4.6.6.11 In cases where there is no initial consensus with regards to the final outcome, all of the examiners must be consulted in determining the outcome, even if an examiner was

not present at the oral examination.

- 4.6.6.12 Once consensus is reached, the outcome is recorded on the Examination Commission Form and signed by the members present, using the form *PG05-M Examination Commission Report*.
- 4.6.6.13 The final mark is made available to the student.
- 4.6.7 In the case where the Postgraduate Coordinator, as described in paragraph 5.1, decides that an oral examination with the examiners present is **not** necessary, the following procedure is followed:
 - 4.6.7.1 The Postgraduate Coordinator proposes to the examiners that the oral examination be waived, and sends the comments by the examiners to the supervisor, who discusses it with the candidate.
 - 4.6.7.2 The candidate prepares a response within one week, which is sent to all the examiners together with the marks awarded by all examiners.
 - 4.6.7.3 The examiners are then requested to either confirm their original mark, or to propose a new mark. Any examiner can also request a full oral examination at this stage.
 - 4.6.7.4 Based on the feedback from the examiners, the Postgraduate Coordinator now either awards a final mark, calls a meeting of the full Examination Commission to decide a final mark, or calls for an oral examination.
 - 4.6.7.5 If a mark is awarded by the Postgraduate Coordinator, all the examiners have to approve the mark in writing.
 - 4.6.7.6 If all members of the Examination Commission agree with the proposed mark, the outcome is recorded on the Examination Commission Form and signed by the members, or confirmed by email to the Postgraduate Coordinator, using the form *PG05-M Examination Commission Report*. At this stage, the final mark may be made available to the student.
 - 4.6.7.7 If any member of the Examination Commission does not agree with the proposed mark, the procedure for an oral examination with the examiners is followed.
- 4.6.8 A candidate has only one opportunity to make substantive improvements to the thesis, to the satisfaction of the examiners. These improvements must be submitted within allowed time limits on the Master's programme.
- 4.6.9 If consensus about the final result cannot be reached during the normal examination process, the case is referred to the Departmental Management Committee. If all examiners recommend a fail or all recommend a pass, the Departmental Management Committee decides the final mark. Otherwise, the Departmental Management Committee should propose one or more additional examiners. In this case, the Faculty Committee makes the final decision based on all the available information, including the reports from the additional examiners.
- 4.6.10 The chairperson returns the Examination Commission Form, as well as the evaluation reports and recommendations, to the postgraduate administrative officer, who, in consultation with the Postgraduate Coordinator, is responsible for capturing the final grade mark on the SU system.
- 4.6.11 The supervisor(s) has the right to appeal if he/she has serious objections regarding the final outcome of the Examination Commission, and if a report was submitted on time. Written appeal must take place via the relevant Postgraduate Coordinator, who can then refer it to the Departmental Management Committee or to the Faculty Committee for further handling.
- 4.6.12 If an upgrade to PhD is recommended, the procedures as described in the document *Procedure-PhD Processes*, are followed.

4.6.13 The required editorial changes should now be implemented in consultation with the supervisor(s).

4.6.14 When the supervisor(s) and/or the examiners are satisfied with the edited thesis, the pdf-version of the document can be uploaded to the SU database, in accordance with the departmental procedures.

4.7 Completion

Upon finalisation of the evaluation process, the Faculty Administrator initiates the payment for external examination by sending claim forms to the external examiner(s).