

# Processes for PhD

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# **1 Definitions and General Requirements**

This document should be read as setting the minimum standards regarding PhD processes in the faculty. Note that in this document, the following 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 Delegation**

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 (General) of the Calendar)

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.

## **1.4 Candidature Panel**

A Candidature Panel comprises the proposed/actual supervisor(s) and at least two expert and experienced people, one of whom must come from outside the home department, with at least two members holding PhD's. The Vice-Dean (Research & Industry Liaison) must approve the proposed Candidature Panel.

## **1.5 Research Proposal**

The Research Proposal is a document, limited to 30 pages in length, developed in consultation with the supervisor(s), which must contain at least the following information:

- A descriptive title.

- An exposition of the literature relevant to the proposed PhD study, as well as a synthesis and assessment of the most important themes found in the literature.
- A clear explanation of the objectives of the study, with particular reference to how it corresponds to already published work and what the expected original contribution of the study will be.
- A description of the research methodology that will achieve the stated objectives.
- A broad time framework for the study, typically in terms of 4 to 10 activities, and a brief description of the main focus of each activity.
- A clear explanation of the infrastructure and equipment (including software, equipment, laboratories, operating costs, etc.) that will be required to complete the study, as well as arrangements that have been made to ensure that the infrastructure will indeed be available.
- A critical self-evaluation of the student's progress to date.

## 1.6 Executive Summary

A document, no longer than 600 words, summarizing the Research Proposal, and prepared by the student in consultation with the supervisor(s), according to the template *PG07 - PhD Executive Summary Template*. The following information must be contained in the document:

- The title of the research project.
- Name of the student.
- Name of the supervisor(s).
- A brief description, as well as the aims, of the research project.
- The anticipated unique research contribution(s) of the study, including the titles of the envisaged papers.
- A broad time framework for the study, typically in terms of 4 to 10 activities.
- In the case of an upgrade, a summary of the work that has been completed and what is still required, and a detailed time schedule of work still to be performed.

## 1.7 Pre-requisites for an Upgrade from Master's degree to PhD

- Upgrades from Master's to PhD programmes are only possible from the MEng(Research) or the MEngSc(Research).
- Candidates must be in their second year of registration for the Master's degree.
- At the time of application, the research work should already contain substantial original material, which is publishable. A peer-reviewed conference or journal paper must already have been accepted for publication, or must be judged as publishable by the candidature panel. Alternatively, in the case where a full Master's examination was conducted, the examiners must judge the work in the thesis as being publishable.
- The work completed at the time of application for the upgrade, should be of such a high quality that a substantial part of it can form part of a PhD dissertation.
- The scope of the work should be extendable to the expected levels for a PhD.
- The additional work should be of such a nature that it can be completed within 18 months of full-time work.

## 1.8 Requirements for the Appointment of Postgraduate Examiners

The following is a list of default conditions on examiners. If a proposed examiner does not satisfy one or more of these conditions, a motivation is required.

- An examiner must hold a degree at least the same level of the one being examined, in an applicable field of study, or have demonstrated equivalent expertise in the field. A separate motivation is required in the latter case.
- In the case of inter-disciplinary work, the examiners must represent at least two of the disciplines.
- At least one examiner must hold an appointment in the host department, or a closely related academic department at Stellenbosch University.
- The number and qualifications of examiners required are:
  - For a Master's thesis, at least one external and one internal examiner must be appointed.
  - For a Master's thesis, if the student is to be considered for an upgrade to a PhD, at least two examiners should hold a PhD in an applicable field of study.
  - For a PhD, at least two external (of which at least one international) and one internal examiner must be appointed (see below).
  - For a PhD, the Scopus/Google profile of each external examiner must be provided.
- Note that the faculty only pays for one external examiner for an M, and two for a PhD.
- An internal examiner must have a current formal affiliation with Stellenbosch University. This includes postdocs, academic staff, Emeritus Professors within 3 years of retirement, extraordinary appointments, and adjoint appointments.
- An external examiner:
  - may not have had a formal affiliation with Stellenbosch University for the previous three years.
  - may not have a current formal affiliation with Stellenbosch University, except for Emeritus Professors who have retired more than 3 years ago.
  - may not currently be involved in formal collaboration, or joint projects, with the supervisor. May not have joint authorship with the supervisor of papers within the previous 3 years.
- An international examiner:
  - must have resided outside of South Africa for at least three years.
  - must primarily be affiliated with a non-South African institution.
- The following conditions hold for all examiners:
  - must satisfy the requirements given in Part 1 of the SU Calendar.
  - an examiner may have no significant family or personal relation with the candidate and/or supervisor(s),
  - an examiner may not be a co-supervisor of the student.
  - an examiner may not be a current or recent (within two years) student of the supervisor.
  - an examiner may not have any formal collaboration with the student.
  - there shall be no financial involvement of the examiner, and/or his/her business unit, in the research and outcomes of the examination process.

## 2 Application and Registration

The faculty offers a number of paths for PhD registration. These are:

- Registration after a Master's degree without a Research Proposal.
- Registration after a Master's degree with a Research Proposal.
- Upgrading from an MEng/MEngSc(Research) after a Master's examination process.
- Upgrading from an MEng/MEngSc(Research) on recommendation of the supervisor(s).

### 2.1 Registration without a Research Proposal

- 2.1.1 Both full-time and part-time students can register for a PhD without a Research Proposal after approval by the Departmental Management Committee. Part-time students may be required to submit a full Research Proposal before being allowed to register.
- 2.1.2 The prospective student and possible supervisor(s) come to a verbal agreement regarding a possible field of study.
- 2.1.3 If the supervisor(s) is willing to accept the student, the departmental PhD application form is completed, as obtained from the Postgraduate Coordinator. Departments can choose to use the faculty form *PG06-PhD Application Form*.
- 2.1.4 The application form and academic record of the prospective student are submitted to the Departmental Management Committee. The Committee may request additional information (such as a full CV) to assist in the decision-making process. If approved, the relevant application form is signed by the Departmental Chair.
- 2.1.5 The Postgraduate Coordinator informs the Faculty Administrator, who then registers the student, without a dissertation subject. The application forms are archived in the department. Students are normally only allowed to register in the first semester. Students who want to begin their studies in the second semester can be registered as special students for that semester.
- 2.1.6 Once registered, the student must submit a full Research Proposal, together with an Executive Summary using the form *PG07-PhD Executive Summary Template*, to the supervisor, by the first day of the second semester in their first year of registration.
- 2.1.7 Once the supervisor(s) is satisfied with the Research Proposal and Executive Summary, it is submitted to the Departmental Management Committee.
- 2.1.8 The Departmental Management Committee proposes a Candidature Panel to the Vice-Dean (Research & Industry Liaison), for approval. The supervisor can be requested to identify possible panel members.
- 2.1.9 The Postgraduate Coordinator sends out the Research Proposal and Executive Summary to each member of the Candidature Panel, who each completes the form *PG08-PhD Proposal Reviewer Report*, and returns it to the Postgraduate Coordinator.
- 2.1.10 Any member of the Candidature Panel may request an oral presentation, and/or improvements to the Research Proposal and/or Executive Summary. This is coordinated by the Postgraduate Coordinator. Only a single round of improvements is allowed. If all the members of the panel do not individually recommend approval even after one improvement, an oral becomes mandatory. The oral is attended by the full Candidature Panel, and chaired by the Postgraduate Coordinator.
- 2.1.11 If an oral is held, members of the Candidature Panel are offered the opportunity to re-submit their individual *PhD Proposal Reviewer Report* forms. The previous forms are then disregarded.
- 2.1.12 The Candidature Panel's individual *PhD Proposal Reviewer Report* forms then serve on the Departmental Management Committee for approval.

- 2.1.13 The Departmental Management Committee recommends acceptance or rejection of the Research Proposal and/or Executive Summary. The Committee may request the opinion of an additional external panel member if the panel members are not unanimous. The recommendation form *PG09-PhD Proposal Outcome Report* is completed by the Departmental Chair, and submitted, as well as the individual *PhD Proposal Reviewer Report* forms, Executive Summary and the Research Proposal, to the Faculty Administrator.
- 2.1.14 The Faculty Administrator includes the recommendation in the agenda of the Faculty Committee.
- 2.1.15 The full process must be completed in time for the closing of the agenda of the last Faculty Committee meeting of the first year of registration. Late submissions will only be considered at the second Faculty Committee of the following year, and only if motivated by the supervisor. In such a case, the student will be unregistered for the first six months of the year. No applications will be processed at the first Faculty Committee meeting of the year.
- 2.1.16 The PhD Proposal Outcome Report form and the Executive Summary serve at the Faculty Committee for approval. In the case of a rejection of the proposal by the Departmental Management Committee, the individual PhD Proposal Reviewer Report forms are also included in the Faculty Committee agenda. The Faculty Committee may request changes to the Executive Summary, such changes to be made to the satisfaction of the Vice-Dean (Research & Industry Liaison) before the subsequent Faculty Board meeting.
- 2.1.17 After approval by the Faculty Board, the subject of the dissertation is added to the student's existing academic record.

## **2.2 Registration with a Research Proposal**

- 2.2.1 The student applies to the department using the departmental procedures, and obtains provisional acceptance, and a supervisor.
- 2.2.2 The student, in consultation with the supervisor, prepares a full Research Proposal, and an Executive Summary.
- 2.2.3 The process follows that of registration without a Research Proposal, except that the Research Proposal and Executive Summary are submitted together with the application.

## **2.3 Upgrading during the Normal Master's Evaluation Process**

- 2.3.1 The supervisor(s) motivates to the Postgraduate Coordinator, in writing, that a candidate be considered for an upgrade during the formal examination process. This should be done in time for the first Faculty Committee meeting of the second semester, as examiners with the correct qualifications need to be appointed at that meeting. This will allow the examination process, and upgrade decision, to take place before the last Faculty Committee meeting of the year.
- 2.3.2 The motivation should address the pre-requisites for an upgrade.
- 2.3.3 The Postgraduate Coordinator ensures that at least two of the examiners hold PhD qualifications.
- 2.3.4 A formal oral examination (required in this case) is held.
- 2.3.5 After completion of the oral examination and after awarding a mark, the Postgraduate Coordinator, in consultation with all the examiners concerned and the supervisor(s), considers the advisability of upgrading to a PhD, at the hand of the pre-requisites for an upgrade, and the motivation by the supervisor(s). Both the examination results and the recommendation for an upgrade are noted in the form *PG05-M Examination Commission Report*.
- 2.3.6 If it is unanimously decided that an upgrade is NOT appropriate, the standard Master's process is followed.

- 2.3.7 If it is unanimously decided that an upgrade is appropriate, this option is offered to the candidate. In this case, the supervisor discusses the process, advantages and disadvantages of the upgrade process with the student. If a unanimous decision cannot be reached, the matter is referred to the Departmental Management Committee for a final decision.
- 2.3.8 If the offer is accepted by the candidate, the supervisor requests the candidate to prepare only an Executive Summary, using the form *PG07-PhD Executive Summary Template*. The Executive Summary must clearly distinguish between the completed work and the proposed new work.
- 2.3.9 The candidate confirms that he/she has full knowledge of the implications of an upgrade, by signing the Executive Summary.
- 2.3.10 The Executive Summary, examiners' reports for the Master's degree, the M Examination Commission report with the recommendation for an upgrade, and the supervisor's motivation, serve at the Departmental Management Committee for approval, together with the form *PG09-PhD Proposal Outcome Report*.
- 2.3.11 The Executive Summary and PhD Proposal Outcome report form are submitted to the Faculty Committee for approval.
- 2.3.12 An upgrade can also be considered in the case where a supervisor(s) did not motivate an upgrade before appointment of the examiners, but indicated this in the Supervisor Declaration submitted before the thesis is sent out for examination, or if any of the examiners spontaneously recommends this in his/her report. In any of these cases, if at least two examiners hold PhD qualifications, a formal oral examination must be held, after which the process in 2.3.5 to 2.3.10 is followed, with the only addition that the supervisor has to support the upgrade.
- 2.3.13 An upgrade can also be considered if any of the examiners spontaneously recommends this during a normal oral examination. In this case, if at least two examiners hold PhD qualifications, the process in 2.3.5 to 2.3.10 is followed, with the only addition that the supervisor has to support the upgrade.
- 2.3.14 In any of the cases where upgrades are considered, but at least two examiners do not hold PhD qualifications, the Master's evaluation process is completed normally, without any recommendation regarding an upgrade. Following this, the Departmental Management Committee considers the merits of an upgrade, based on the results of the examination. If the case is judged to have merit, additional examiners as required are nominated to the Vice-Dean(Research and Industry Liaison), who approve them in the interim. Following, the process in 2.3.5 to 2.3.10 is followed only for evaluation of the upgrade (i.e. the awarded mark for the thesis is not considered again). In this case, an oral evaluation is required. The interim approval of the additional examiners must be ratified at the following Faculty Committee meeting.
- 2.3.15 The full process has to be completed in time for the closing of the agenda of the last Faculty Committee meeting of the year. Upgrade proposals which result from examinations after this date, (i.e. December and January) will be considered at the second Faculty Committee of the following year. In these cases, the student will re-register as a Master's student, with the registration changed retrospectively to a PhD, after being approved at the Faculty Committee.
- 2.3.16 If a student, after consultation with the supervisor, decides after a period of time that he/she does not want to continue with doctoral studies, the registration can be converted back to Master's registration, after consultation with the Departmental Management Committee. The final mark that was determined during the Master's evaluation process is still valid. Note that the candidate then has to change his/her registration to MEng/MEngSc(Research) at the start of the following year, and can only graduate at the end of that year.

## **2.4 Upgrading on Recommendation of Supervisor(s)**

- 2.4.1 The supervisor(s) realize during the course of the candidate's M studies that the research exhibits such a degree of originality that the registration may potentially be upgraded to doctoral studies.
- 2.4.2 The supervisor discusses the possibilities of an upgrade with the student.
- 2.4.3 If the student indicates interest, the supervisor(s) motivates, in writing, an upgrade to the Postgraduate Coordinator, addressing the pre-requisites for an upgrade.
- 2.4.4 The supervisor discusses the process, advantages and disadvantages of the upgrade process with the student.
- 2.4.5 The supervisor(s) requests the candidate to prepare a formal Research Proposal and Executive Summary, using the form *PG07-PhD Executive Summary Template*. For an upgrade, the proposal must clearly discuss how the completed work fits into the proposal, and the proposed additional work still to be completed.
- 2.4.6 Once the supervisor(s) is satisfied with the Research Proposal and Executive Summary, both are submitted, together with a full academic record of the student, and the motivation letter of the supervisor(s), to the Departmental Management Committee. The student confirms that he/she has full knowledge of the implications of an upgrade, by signing the Executive Summary. The due date for this each year is 1 September. If the student misses this deadline, the normal process for evaluation of a Master's thesis is followed, including the various upgrade options described in 2.3.
- 2.4.7 The same procedure as is the case with doctoral students who have already been registered without a research topic, is now followed for the evaluation of the research proposal, except that (a) an oral is required, at which the full Candidature Panel is present, and (b) the proposal is evaluated in terms of the pre-requisites for an upgrade.
- 2.4.8 The Departmental Management Committee recommends acceptance or rejection of the upgrade proposal, the Research Proposal and the Executive Summary. The Committee may request the opinion of an additional external panel member if the panel members are not unanimous. If an upgrade is recommended, the recommendation form *PG09-PhD Proposal Outcome Report* is completed by the Chair, and submitted with the Executive Summary, to the Faculty Administrator.
- 2.4.9 If the upgrade is NOT recommended, the candidate continues with his/her M studies.
- 2.4.10 The full process has to be completed in time for the closing of the agenda of the last Faculty Committee meeting of the year, for the student to register for a PhD in the following year.
- 2.4.11 If a student, after consultation with the supervisor, decides after a period of time that he/she does not want to continue with doctoral studies, the registration can be converted back to Master's registration, after consultation with the departmental Management Committee. Note that the candidate then has to change his/her registration to MEng/MEngSc(Research) at the start of the following year, and can only graduate at the end of that year.

## **3 Registration after Maximum Allowed Time**

- 3.1.1 Doctoral students who do not complete their programmes within the maximum permissible period of registration, are automatically admitted for a final concessional year. In April, 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:
- 3.1.2 PhD full-time 3 years (4 years after starting Masters if upgrade)



- 3.1.3 PhD part-time 6 years (7 years after starting Master's if upgrade)
- 3.1.4 The list of students in their final concessional year is sent to the relevant department's Postgraduate Coordinators, Departmental Chairs and the Vice-Dean (Research & Industry Liaison). The Postgraduate Coordinators inform the supervisors.
- 3.1.5 Students who want to continue their programmes in the year(s) following the final concessional year, are informed in the same notification that they have to formally apply for re-admission to the Office of the Postgraduate Coordinator by 1 December of their final concessional year, for consideration by the Departmental Management Committee. The re-admission application should be in writing, using the form *PG12 - M and PhD Re-admission Application*, and in consultation with the supervisor. The application should include the following:
- The reasons why the programme was not completed in the final concessional year.
  - Current state of completion of the programme.
  - A schedule in terms of quarterly goals for the year, which will ensure completion of the examination process by the end of the year.
- 3.1.6 The Postgraduate Coordinator requests a confidential recommendation by the supervisor.
- 3.1.7 The Management Committee approves or declines the application, and sends the recommendation by the close of the Faculty Committee agenda to the Faculty Administrator, who will table it at the first Faculty Committee meeting of the year.
- 3.1.8 If an application for re-admission is not received by 1 December, the student is not allowed to register. In such a case, the student can in special cases still apply for re-admission before 31 March. In such a case, a strong motivation by the supervisor is required, and this application will only be considered at the second Faculty Committee meeting of the year in May. The student will therefore be unregistered for 6 months.
- 3.1.9 At the end of each quarter (i.e. the last day of March, June, and September), the student submits a two page/500 word progress report to the Postgraduate Coordinator, who submits it to the Management Committee.
- 3.1.10 It is the responsibility of the student to identify a lack of progress in terms of the schedule, and to inform the Management Committee in the case of a lack of progress.
- 3.1.11 In the case of satisfactory progress, the report and evaluations are filed. In the case of non-satisfactory progress, the Management Committee informs the student in writing that the progress was non-satisfactory. The Management Committee may also decide on other measures, including terminating or limiting support for the project.
- 3.1.12 The student can only be considered for re-admission in the second year following the final concessional year if an examination ready thesis/dissertation is submitted to the supervisor by 15 January of that year.

## **4 Examination Procedures**

### **4.1 Appointment of Examiners**

- 4.1.1 The examiners, after having been consulted beforehand, are nominated in writing by the supervisor(s), using the form *PG01 – Appointment of Postgraduate Examiners*, according to the applicable pre-requisites.
- 4.1.2 The nominations are submitted to the Departmental Management Committee and formally approved at a regular meeting.
- 4.1.3 Upon approval of the examiners, the names and necessary information are forwarded to the

Faculty Administrator for placement on the agenda of the Faculty Committee.

- 4.1.4 Following approval by the Faculty Committee, and thereafter final approval by the Faculty Board, appointment letters are sent out by the Faculty Administrator.
- 4.1.5 The supervisor(s) may not discuss the merits of the candidate or the dissertation with any of the examiners, before the examination is finalised.
- 4.1.6 The student may not know the identity of the examiners until after the examiner's reports have been received.
- 4.1.7 Up to the time of submission of the final copy of the dissertation on the Stellenbosch University archive, the student may only discuss the dissertation and its merits with an examiner during the oral examination, not before or after.

## **4.2 Submission of Dissertation**

- 4.2.1 It is the responsibility of the supervisor(s) to verify that the content and editorial care of the dissertation is of acceptable quality.
- 4.2.2 A plagiarism statement, provided as the form *PG02-Plagiarism Declaration*, must be signed by the candidate and must appear directly after the Declaration in the dissertation.
- 4.2.3 The student submits the dissertation to the link designated by the department for *Turnitin*.
- 4.2.4 In the case of a dissertation being classified as secret, the document is submitted to *Turnitin* by means of a separate link. This link is again designated by the department, and does not make the dissertation visible on *Turnitin* for other users.
- 4.2.5 After having received the *Turnitin* report, and before the dissertation can be submitted, the supervisor(s) and the candidate should try to reach consensus that the similarity index is acceptable.
- 4.2.6 The supervisor(s) gives written permission for the dissertation to be submitted for examination, using the form *PG03-Confidential Declaration by supervisor*.
- 4.2.7 If the supervisor(s) does not give permission for the dissertation to be submitted, the candidate can insist that his/her dissertation be examined. In such a case it is required that the supervisor(s) submits a Supervisor's Report (see Definition above, 5.5.1.4 in the Postgraduate Qualifications chapter of the Calendar Part 1) by the due date for submission of the examiners' evaluation reports. The report should include the supervisor's reasons for not approving the submission of the dissertation. The Examination Commission will then review the report upon finalisation of the examination process.
- 4.2.8 Irrespective of the permission by the supervisor(s), the Departmental Management Committee can decide not to send a dissertation out for examination, e.g. in cases where supplementary modules have not been completed, plagiarism is found, the dissertation does not conform to departmental formatting or editorial standards, etc.
- 4.2.9 In the case where the supervisor(s) does support the submission of the dissertation, he/she can still elect to submit a Supervisor's Report (see Definition above, 5.5.1.4 in the Postgraduate Qualifications chapter of the Calendar Part 1) on the dissertation, by the due date for submission of the examiners' evaluation reports, to the designated postgraduate departmental officer. Such a report ensures that the supervisor(s) has the right to appeal if there are serious objections to the official results.
- 4.2.10 The student submits the required number of hard copies and a pdf of the dissertation to the postgraduate departmental officer who is responsible for distributing the documents.

### **4.3 Distribution of Thesis**

- 4.3.1 In addition to the following documentation, the postgraduate departmental officer, who is responsible for distributing the documents, sends the dissertation to the internal and external examiner(s) – preferably by courier to the external examiner(s):
- A cover letter that identifies the candidate and indicates the deadline for submission of the evaluation report.
  - The form *PG10-PhD Examiner Report* form.
- 4.3.2 The departmental postgraduate officer verifies the receipt of each copy of the thesis within a week of sending it out.
- 4.3.3 The written letter of consent, which confirms that the dissertation may be submitted for examination, is not sent to the examiner(s).

### **4.4 Receipt of Thesis Evaluation Reports**

- 4.4.1 The departmental postgraduate officer, who is responsible for receiving the evaluation reports, ensures that all reports are received by the due date. Timely reminder messages to the examiners may sometimes be necessary.
- 4.4.2 The Postgraduate Coordinator and supervisor(s) are notified as each evaluation report is received. Once all the reports have been received, the Postgraduate Coordinator appoints the chairperson of the Examination Commission. The chairperson is normally a senior member of the academic staff, and can be the Postgraduate Coordinator.
- 4.4.3 As the reports are received, the supervisor(s) is given full access and may, if the examiner(s) indicated it as such on the report form, share the feedback, and the identity of the examiner, with the candidate. However, the outcome, as recommended by the examiners, may not be shared with the candidate.

### **4.5 Oral Examination**

- 4.5.1 An oral examination is conducted in all cases.
- 4.5.2 If the recommendations of the examiners are not unanimous with regards to a pass, the Postgraduate Coordinator, in consultation with the supervisor(s), may request the candidate to make the changes/improvements as recommended by the examiners, before an oral is scheduled. The improved dissertation is then returned to the examiners for re-evaluation sufficiently in advance of the oral so that the examiners have adequate time to review the improvements.
- 4.5.3 The Examination Commission consists of the chairperson, and all the examiners. An examiner who is available via telephone, Skype, or a similar connection, is acceptable and he/she is regarded as being present.
- 4.5.4 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.
- 4.5.5 The candidate must be present in person.
- 4.5.6 The chairperson is in possession of all the examiners' evaluation reports and recommendations.
- 4.5.7 The candidate submits a copy of the journal article on his research (the article should have been sent off prior to the oral taking place). In the case of a dissertation being classified as SECRET, the requirement for the journal article to be sent off is no longer valid.
- 4.5.8 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 the dissertation is classified as SECRET, then the Postgraduate Coordinator can, upon approval by the Vice Dean (Research and Industry Liaison), waive the requirement for an open presentation.

- 4.5.9 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.
- 4.5.10 The chairperson now facilitates the candidate's examination by the examiners. The supervisor(s) does not participate in the question session.
- 4.5.11 At the end of the question session, and after the candidate has been excused, the supervisor(s) are given the opportunity to put the candidate's research into context with regards to aspects such as workload, autonomy, unique contributions, etc. The report of the supervisor(s), if submitted, is now presented by the chairperson and is considered by the Examination Commission. The supervisor(s) is now excused and the chairperson attempts to reach consensus with regards to the outcome.
- 4.5.12 In the case where the examiners' reports do not unanimously indicate a result, all of the examiners must be consulted in determining the outcome of the examination process, even if an examiner was not present at the oral examination.
- 4.5.13 Once consensus is reached, the outcome is recorded on the Examination Commission Form and signed by the members present, using the form *PG11-PhD Examination Commission Report*. If an examiner's recommended result before the oral is different from the consensus outcome and that examiner was not present at the oral (i.e. the examiner could not sign the Report), written confirmation of that examiner's support of the consensus outcome must be obtained (e.g. an email confirming his/her support).
- 4.5.14 The chairperson returns the Examination Commission Form, as well as all the evaluation reports and recommendations, to the postgraduate administrative officer.
- 4.5.15 A candidate has only one opportunity to make substantive improvements to the dissertation, to the satisfaction of the examiners. These improvements must be submitted within allowed time limits on the PhD programme.
- 4.5.16 If consensus about the final result cannot be reached during the normal examination process, the following process is followed:
  - A minimum of two external assessors are appointed, of which at least one should be a specialist in the research area of the examiner(s) that did not recommend a pass. The appointment process of the assessors is identical to the appointment procedure for postgraduate examiners.
  - The assessors are provided with a copy of the dissertation, the examiners' anonymous reports, as well as a comprehensive report by the chairperson of the Examination Commission, which includes the views of the supervisor(s) and the candidate.
  - The reports of the assessors are received by the chairperson of the Examination Commission and made available to the examiners.
  - If consensus regarding the outcome can still not be reached, it can be expected of the candidate to adapt his dissertation in order to try to achieve consensus amongst the examiners.
  - If consensus can still not be reached, the chairperson of the Examination Commission should confer with the external assessors in order to resolve the differences and reach consensus.
  - The external assessors' final reports, regardless of whether consensus has been reached, are submitted together with the complete set of documents to the Faculty Committee, where a final recommendation is made for approval by the Faculty Board.

- 4.5.17 If a successful result, the above-mentioned documentation, together with the 50- and 100-word summary, are forwarded to the Faculty Administrator for inclusion in the agenda of the Faculty Committee.
- 4.5.18 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 Executive Committee or to the Faculty Committee for further handling.
- 4.5.19 If the recommendation of the Examination Commission to award the doctoral degree is unanimous, and if the result is confirmed by the Faculty Board, then the decision is included in the Communication Report to the EC(S) and Senate.
- 4.5.20 If the initial recommendation of the Examination Commission to award the doctoral degree is not unanimous, then the decision of the Faculty Board needs to be included in the Recommendation Report to the EC(S) and Senate.
- 4.5.21 If the recommendation of the Examination Commission is to not award the doctoral degree, then the decision of the Faculty Board needs to be included in the Recommendation Report to the EC(S) and Senate.
- 4.5.22 The required editorial changes should now be implemented in consultation with the supervisor(s).
- 4.5.23 If the supervisor(s) and/or the examiners are satisfied with the edited dissertation, then the supervisor(s) should inform the postgraduate administrative officer in writing that the pdf-version of the document can be uploaded to the SU database.
- 4.5.24 Departmental procedures dictate who is responsible for the nomination, uploading and approval of the final version of the dissertation on SUNScholar.

#### **4.6 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).